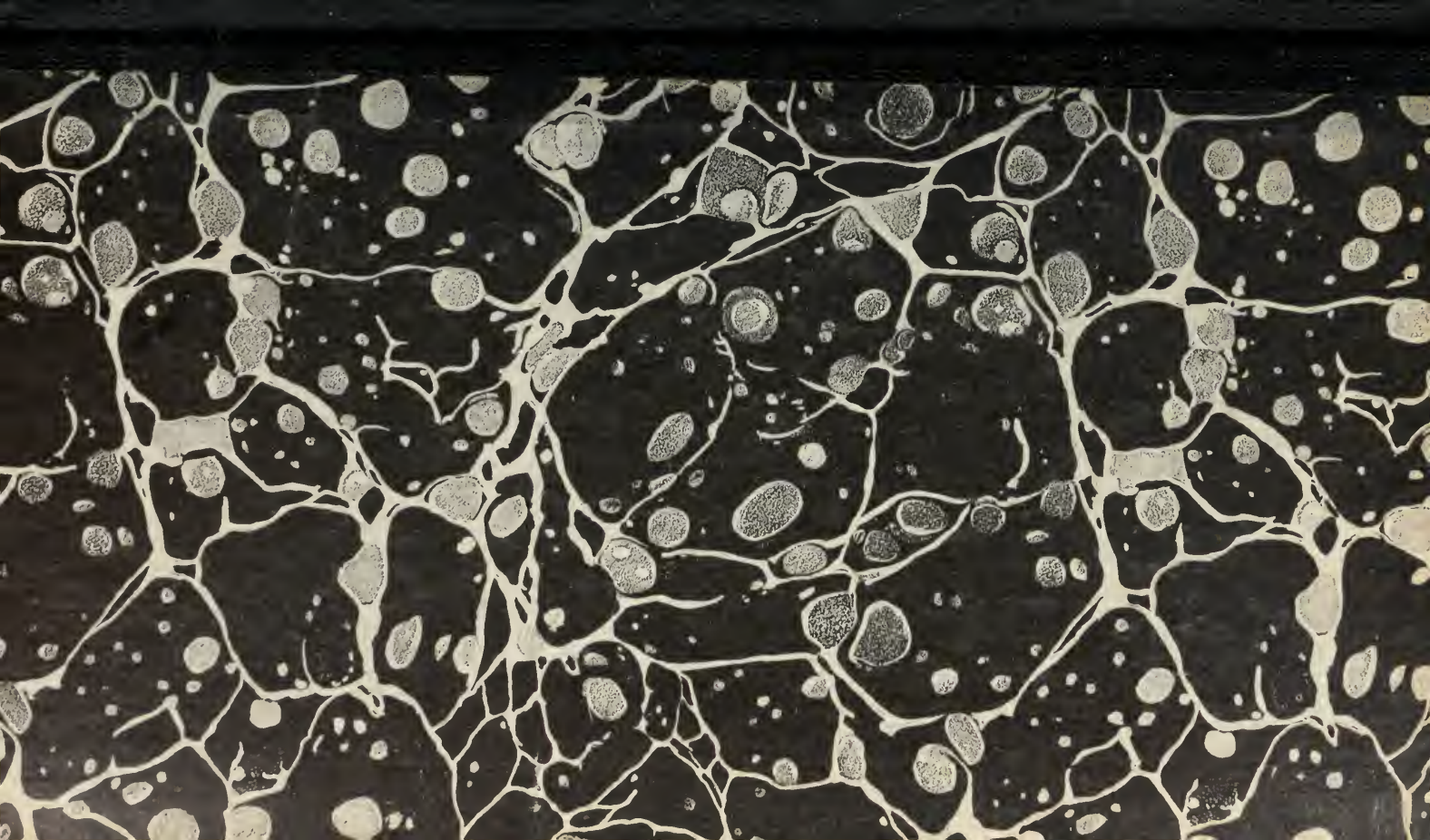

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A

LETTER,

COMMERCIAL AND POLITICAL,

ADDRESSED TO

THE R^t. H^onble. WILLIAM PITT:

IN WHICH

THE REAL INTERESTS OF BRITAIN,

IN THE

PRESENT CRISIS,

ARE CONSIDERED,

AND

SOME OBSERVATIONS ARE OFFERED

ON THE

GENERAL STATE OF

EUROPE.

THE SECOND EDITION, CORRECTED AND ENLARGED.

By JASPER WILSON, Esq.

WHO HATH TAKEN THIS COUNSEL AGAINST TYRE, THE CROWNING CITY, WHOSE MERCHANTS ARE PRINCES, WHOSE TRAFFICKERS ARE THE HONOURABLE OF THE EARTH? *Isaiah.*

LONDON:

PRINTED FOR G. G. J. AND J. ROBINSON, PATERNOSTER-ROW.

MDCCXCIII.

Price One Shilling and Sixpence.

AC911.1793.C87 c.2

PREFACE.

THE following Letter was originally written, as well as printed, in ſo haſty a manner, that ſome inaccuracies of compoſition eſcaped notice, as well as ſeveral errors of the preſs—it was perceived too, on a farther review, that ſome illuſtrations and additions to particular paſſages were wanted, and a ſhort, but general ſummary of the whole.—Such corrections and enlargements have accordingly been made; a Poſtſcript has been added, exemplifying, in ſome of the more material points, the application of events ſubſequent to the original publication of the Letter, to the repreſentations and reaſonings it contains; and the whole, it is hoped, will now be found leſs unworthy of the favourable reception which the firſt edition has met with.

30307 43

LETTER, &c.

SIR,

AN inquiry into the cauſes of the general calamities which affect the commercial and manufacturing intereſts, and the connexion which theſe may have with the meaſures of government, ſeems properly addreſſed to you as the Miniſter of the Crown, and the Leader of the Houſe of Commons.

A concurrence of fortune and talents has raiſed you to a degree of conſequence in the public eye which no other individual of the age has attained, and your friends having aſcribed to you much of our late unexampled proſperity, your enemies will doubtleſs impute to you our preſent unparalleled diſtreſs. Party zeal may blind the one and the other; but the ſubject of the preſent inquiry muſt in every point of view preſs with peculiar force on your mind.

The writer of this was one of the warmeſt of your admirers. The progreſs of time and of events has cooled his enthuſiaſm reſpecting you, but has not, as is often the caſe, turned it into hoſtility. Neither diſpoſed to offend or flatter, he would deliver his ſentiments with the deference due to

your extraordinary talents, but with the earneſtneſs and ſolemnity ſuited to the preſent criſis of human affairs.

That the calamities which affect our commerce and manufactures are great beyond example, it is unneceſſary to prove. The unprecedented and alarming meaſures which are reſorted to in parliament to prevent the univerſal wreck of credit, put this beyond a doubt.—It does not however ſeem to be generally obſerved that theſe calamities are not peculiar to Britain. Bankruptcies have ſpread and are ſpreading every where over the continent of Europe, through France, Holland, Germany, Poland, Ruſſia, Italy, and Spain, and every where private as well as public credit is impaired or deſtroyed. If the injury to commerce and manufactures be more felt in Britain than elſewhere, it is becauſe we have had more commerce and manufactures to be injured. And this reaſon, which explains why Britain ſuffers apparently more than the other kingdoms of Europe, will alſo explain why the different towns and counties of Britain ſuffer at preſent exactly in proportion to their former commercial proſperity. In one reſpect England differs at this juncture from moſt of the other European nations—our public credit is yet tolerably ſound—Whilſt the governments of Ruſſia, Auſtria, Poland, France, and Spain, are either bankrupt, or on the verge of bankruptcy, and have had recourſe to practices that differ little from open rapine.

I ſtate theſe facts on authorities to ſome of which I ſhall allude as I go on, but I believe that you will admit them at once as unqueſtionable.

To ſeek for the origin of ſuch general calamities within the precincts of a ſingle kingdom, is to labour to no purpoſe. They are to be traced, as it appears, to the prevalence and extenſion of the war-ſyſtem throughout Europe, ſupported as it has been by the univerſal adoption of the funding-ſyſtem. As this idea has not been laid before the public, as perhaps

haps it may not have preſented itſelf fully even to your mind, and as it ſeems to be of the utmoſt importance, I muſt beg leave to unfold it at ſome length, and to ſhew its application to our own diſtreſſes.

Speculative men, Sir, in the retirement of their cloſets, have delighted to contemplate the progreſs of knowledge, and to ſhew its happy effects on the condition of our ſpecies. The truth ſeems to be, as was aſſerted by Lord Bacon, that "knowledge is power," or, to ſpeak more popularly, that power is increaſed in proportion to knowledge. But the effects of power on human happineſs depend on the wiſdom and benevolence by which it is directed; and where theſe are not found in a correſponding degree, an increaſe of power muſt often add to the miſeries of the human race. Without however diſputing the happy influences of the progreſs of knowledge on the whole, it may be doubted whether theſe have extended in any conſiderable degree to the general political ſyſtem; and it may be clearly ſhewn, that its effects on the intercourſe of nations with each other, have been hitherto in many reſpects injurious.

Among ſavages the means of intercourſe are reſtricted to tribes who are neighbours, and hoſtilities are confined in the ſame manner. As knowledge increaſes, theſe means are multiplied and extended, and nations not in immediate vicinity learn to mingle in each other's affairs. This is abundantly proved by the hiſtory of European nations, among whom treaties offenſive and defenſive have, with their communication with each other, been conſtantly increaſing for the two laſt centuries; and wars, without becoming leſs frequent, have become far more general, bloody, and expenſive. The balance of power, a notion ſpringing up among ſtateſmen towards the end of the 15th century, has been a principal cauſe both of the frequency and the extenſiveneſs of modern wars; the religious diſtinctions which divided Europe

after the period of the reformation, have alſo been the cauſe or the pretext of frequent hoſtilities; and the ſuppoſed dignity of crowns, an expreſſion the more dangerous from the obſcurity of its meaning, has been conſtantly enumerated among the reaſons which juſtified the inhabitants of different countries in ruſhing to the deſtruction of each other.

Wars thus originating in cauſes peculiar to a ſemi-barbarous ſtate of ſociety, have been extended in other reſpects by the progreſs of knowledge and its effects on the arts. To this we are to attribute many of the improvements in the ſcience of deſtruction, and in the ſcience of finance: to this eſpecially we are to attribute the *funding-ſyſtem*, which at once multiplied the means of warfare twenty-fold, and which, after anticipating and exhauſting the public revenue in almoſt every nation of Europe, ſeems at length to approach the point ſo clearly foretold, when it muſt produce a ſyſtem of general peace, or of univerſal deſolation.

The Italian Republics, according to Dr. Smith, firſt invented funding—from them it paſſed to Spain, and from the Spaniards to the reſt of the European nations. The practice of funding commenced in England with our national debt during the war which terminated in the peace at Ryſwick in the year 1697, and it has been the means by which this debt has accumulated to its preſent enormous amount. The ſyſtem itſelf is preciſely the ſame as to the community, that mortgaging the revenue of an eſtate to raiſe a preſent ſum of money, is to the individual. The income mortgaged by the individual ariſes perhaps from land, that of the ſtate from one or more taxes; and both in the one caſe and in the other, this mortgage is for the payment of the intereſt of the ſum borrowed. The individual generally engages to repay the principal when demanded; the ſtate never does this, but while the intereſt is regularly diſcharged, and the country is tolerably proſperous, the ſecurity given by the ſtate being

being transferable, finds a ready market, and thus the abſorption of the capital, as far as reſpects the creditor of the ſtate, is in a great meaſure remedied.

The convenience of the funding-ſyſtem to thoſe who adminiſter the governments of Europe is obvious.—It enables them on the commencement of wars to multiply their reſources for the moment, perhaps twenty-fold. Previous to this invention, a tax raiſing five hundred thouſand pounds annually, would have ſtrengthened the hands of government by this ſum only; but under the funding-ſyſtem, the tax being mortgaged for ever for as much money as it will pay the annual intereſt of, brings into the treaſury the capital ſum at once, that is, ten or perhaps twelve millions. It is true this ſpendthrift expenditure muſt bring a day of reckoning—But what then? Thoſe who adminiſter the public revenue are not owners of the eſtate, but in general, tenants at will, or at moſt, have a life intereſt in it only. The practice of mortgaging the public revenue during wars prevents the people from feeling the immediate preſſure of the expence, by transferring it in a great meaſure to poſterity. Miniſters look to the preſent moment, and delight in expedients that may delay the evil day.—When it comes, it does not in all probability fall on thoſe with whom the miſchief originated. They are no longer in power; they are perhaps in their graves, and removed from the complaints and wrongs of their injured country.

It is however but candid to acknowledge, that we have ſeen you acting on a ſuperior ſyſtem; incurring the odium of propoſing new taxes, to diſcharge the intereſt of debts contracted in ſupport of meaſures which you had uniformly oppoſed, and teaching almoſt an exhauſted people to bear ſtill heavier burthens, rather than ſacrifice their future good, or violate the eternal obligations of juſtice!—Then was your day of triumph.

Half

Half informed men have ſometimes contended that the national debt is a national good. To enter at large into their arguments is foreign to my purpoſe, ſince this poſition depends on ſophiſms that have been often detected. It may indeed be admitted that ſome accidental advantages have ariſen from the transferable and marketable nature of the ſecurities given to the public creditors: In times of commercial proſperity theſe have promoted circulation, and acted in ſome degree like a quantity of well-ſecured paper money: But this effect, beſides that it is contingent and uncertain, in no reſpect compenſates for the evils ariſing from the preſſure of taxes, the increaſed rate of wages, and the withdrawing of an immenſe capital from productive to unproductive labour *.

Without embarraſſing ourſelves with complicated ideas, it may be at once aſſerted, that a nation which goes on borrowing and mortgaging without redeeming its funds, muſt at length, like an individual, become bankrupt, and that the ruin this produces will correſpond to the magnitude of the bankruptcy. This has been all along clearly foreſeen by thoſe who have examined the ſubject; but the predictions of ſome enlightened men, as to the ſum of debt under which the nation muſt become bankrupt, having turned out fallacious, ignorant perſons have ſuppoſed that the principle, on which theſe predictions were founded, was in itſelf falſe. But admitting that Mr. Hume † predicted that a debt of a hundred millions would bring on a national bankruptcy, he erred in his calculation only from not foreſeeing the influence of the progreſs of knowledge on the uſeful arts, and the increaſed ſources of re-

* See the Wealth of Nations.

† It does not appear that Mr. Hume was the author of this prediction, which has been generally aſcribed to him.—It is however evident from his Eſſay on Public Credit, that he did not foreſee the great amount to which the debt might be carried—a circumſtance eaſily explained.

venue which would thus be opened. The ſurpriſing advances of chemiſtry, and the effects of its application to manufactures; the wonderful combinations of chemiſtry and mechanics, for the reduction of labour—theſe are the happy means by which bankruptcy has been hitherto averted. The ſecurity of property and the ſpirit of liberty diffuſed through the nation, have called forth the talents of our people. Britain has grown proſperous in ſpite of the wretched politics of her rulers. The genius of Watt, Wedgewood, and Arkwright, has counteracted the expenſe and folly of the American war.

Are we to go on for ever in this extraordinary career *? It is impoſſible! the ſources through which we have been enabled to ſuſtain our enormous burthens are in a great meaſure dried up, our burthens themſelves are increaſing, and the whole fabric of our proſperity totters to its baſe!

Our proſperity depends on commerce; commerce requires peace, and all the world is at war—this is the ſhort and the melancholy hiſtory of our ſituation. The ſhock is felt in England more than elſewhere, becauſe, as was ſaid before, England is more commercial than any other nation, but it pervades more or leſs the continent of Europe, from St. Peterſburgh to Leghorn: the hiſtory of commerce records no calamity ſo ſevere and ſo extenſive. Of the houſes that remain ſolvent, it is known, that the greater part are ſtruggling with difficulties; that theſe are hourly increaſing; and that diſtruſt and diſmay prevail univerſally. In Britain, as I ſhall have occaſion to ſhew, our mercantile diſtreſſes are aggravated by the imprudent confidence, ariſing out of extra-

* I might have anſwered this queſtion in the words of Mr. Chalmers, in his "Comparative Eſtimate," where he very juſtly decides, that we can go on incurring debt, and freſh taxes, only while commerce and manufactures increaſe in a correſponding degree. This maſterly work will throw much light on our preſent ſituation; Lord Hawkeſbury will do well to peruſe it once more.

ordinary

ordinary proſperity, which produced a very general over-trading of capital, and in ſome places a ſpirit of very unjuſtifiable ſpeculation; but on the continent, where bankruptcy and diſtreſs began firſt, the imprudence of the mercantile ſyſtem ſeems to have had little ſhare in the failures, which may be traced almoſt entirely to the war politics of the ruling powers, and the dreadful practices by which theſe have been ſupported.

Whoever examines the hiſtory of the military eſtabliſhments of the different European nations, will find that they have been for more than two hundred years almoſt every where regularly increaſing. The means of ſupporting this increaſe may have been found, in part, in the gradual augmentation of opulence and population, which perhaps has taken place pretty generally, in ſpite of the burthen of theſe eſtabliſhments.—But the very great and ſudden increaſe of the armies brought into the field in the latter end of the laſt, and the beginning of the preſent century, is clearly to be attributed to the funding-ſyſtem, which about this time became almoſt univerſal. From this period the ſtanding forces of Europe during peace have been gradually and regularly augmenting as before, and each ſucceſſive war has produced more numerous and better appointed armies than that which preceded.—The forces employed, the expenſe incurred, and the deſtruction produced in the war which terminated in the peace of 1763, far exceeded whatever was before known in the annals of hiſtory. Satiated and exhauſted with ſlaughter, the nations of Chriſtendom ſunk down into a ſhort-lived repoſe. This was ſoon diſturbed by the empreſs of Ruſſia, whoſe reign has involved her ſubjects in perpetual diſtreſſes, her neighbours in conſtant alarms, and has filled the eaſtern parts of Europe with repeated carnage *. In the weſt, the torch

* This ſingular woman affects to be a patroneſs of learning, and is not deſtitute of what are called the princely virtues. She has had a kind of humour

the torch of war was rekindled by England, an a conflict with her own colonies aided by France, more fruitleſs, fierce, and bloody, than the war of 1756, diſſevered her empire, added a hundred millions to her debt, and ſix millions annually to her ſtanding taxes *.

During theſe operations in the eaſt and weſt, the centre of Europe was agitated by the reſtleſs and pragmatic temper of the Emperor Joſeph. This unwiſe and unfortunate, but not ill-intentioned prince, was happily controlled by the talents of the great Frederick, who for the laſt twenty years of his life cultivated the arts of peace, and on ſeveral occaſions ſtifled the flames of a general war. The example of the King of Pruſſia, however, and the mutual jealouſy of the continental powers, wonderfully increaſed the armies of the continent, and during his reign the peace eſtabliſhment of Germany, a country containing leſs than eighteen millions of people, roſe to five or ſix hundred thouſand ſoldiers! By his ſuperior policy the King of Pruſſia indeed contrived to render his army comparatively little burthenſome to his ſubjects, and died with his treaſury full †. But Auſtria and all the inferior powers of Germany have been long very poor. The wants of Joſeph

mour of ſending her picture in gold ſnuff-boxes to literary men in different parts of Europe. Praiſe has been openly beſtowed on her by Zimmermann, and indeed inſinuated by Robertſon. Impartial hiſtory will record the ſteps by which the *wife of Peter III. aſcended his throne*; it will tell of 30,000 Turks maſſacred in cold blood at Iſmael; it will deſcribe the firſt and the ſecond diviſion of Poland; and the annaliſt of better times may record this "auguſt patroneſs of letters" as the ſcourge of the human race.

* By the firſt of theſe wars we conquered America, by the ſecond we loſt it, and thus a balance was ſtruck; but two hundred millions of debt was incurred, and five hundred thouſand lives ſacrificed!—"What hath pride "profited us? Or what good have riches with our vaunting brought us? All "theſe things are paſſed away like a ſhadow, and as a poſt that haſted by."

Wiſdom of Solomon.

† His ſucceſſor, it is generally underſtood, has nearly, if not entirely, diſſipated his treaſures.

were great, thoſe of Leopold greater, and thoſe of the preſent Emperor are extreme—Ruſſia is abſolutely bankrupt, and the whole body of the peaſantry reduced to the moſt wretched poverty. Spain languiſhes under an immenſe load of debt; and the ſame may be ſaid of Holland, Portugal, and, as I am informed, of the northern powers—The ſituation of France needs not to be deſcribed.

A philoſophical mind will diſcover in every page of hiſtory, and will lament, while it excuſes, the fatal ignorance of thoſe by whom nations have been governed. General invectives againſt ſuch characters are however unjuſt; the Rulers of the world ought to be approached with mingled reſpect and pity. Supreme power to its proper exerciſe requires perfect wiſdom, and monarchs as well as miniſters are weak, fallible and ignorant, like ourſelves. Hence it is that we find them in all ages waſting the little hoards of property acquired by private induſtry, in projects of fooliſh vanity, or of ſtill more fooliſh ambition. And hence it is that, during the laſt century, we have ſeen them convert even the acquiſitions of ſcience and of the arts, riſing unprotected in ſociety, to the ſame fatal purpoſes; carrying the fury of war by this means into the moſt remote ſeas and regions, and exhauſting not only the patrimony of a ſingle generation in their raſh and ruinous projects, but that of new generations of men for a long ſucceſſion of years.

In the order of Providence, great evils bring their own remedies, and the funding-ſyſtem, by exhauſting the means of ſupporting war, has a tendency to produce univerſal peace. But it is melancholy to reflect on the national bankruptcies, which it muſt probably render general in the firſt inſtance. Their effects will vary as the people are more or leſs commercial, more or leſs enlightened. They may for a time rivet the chains of deſpotiſm, as in Ruſſia; or raiſe a bloody anarchy on the ruins of monarchy, as in France. A ſyſtem of general peace, adopted ſpeedily, may avert a great part of the calamities which hang over Europe; but,

while paſſion and prejudice ſo generally predominate, this, alas! is rather an object of our wiſhes than our hopes.

It ought however to make a deep impreſſion on thoſe who are entruſted with the happineſs of nations, that the direct cauſe of all the troubles in France was the laviſh expenditure of its old government ſupported by the funding-ſyſtem. The war of 1756, and that undertaken for the Americans, brought this ſyſtem to its criſis; the revenue was more than anticipated by the intereſt of debts and the expenſe of the government; freſh taxes could not be collected; the people called loudly for a redreſs of grievances: the court gave way; popular aſſemblies were ſummoned, and followed each other in rapid ſucceſſion; the current of opinion ſet ſtronger every day againſt every thing eſtabliſhed: the populace found their ſtrength; numbers, inſtead of wiſdom, began to govern; the practice of change begot a habit of changing, and property and principles were ſwept away *.

Happily

* It is the fate of deſpotic governments to be placed in general in the hands of fools; and where folly commands, it is ignorance alone that can be obedient. Nothing ever was ſo palpably abſurd as the principles on which France mingled in the American war. She wiſhed to weaken England, and threw her force into the American ſcale. We had got into a conteſt which muſt have been long, expenſive, and finally unſucceſsful, even had the abſolute conqueſt of the colonies crowned the firſt years of the war. We were likely, from our pride and prejudices, to perſevere to the uttermoſt, and national bankruptcy could only have arreſted our career. France might have looked on in ſecurity, taken the opportunity of the calm to have arranged her finances, reformed her abuſes, and ſtrengthened herſelf by the arts of peace. She might have riſen on our ruins, the empreſs of the ſea, and the arbitreſs of Europe.—She openly interfered—the diſeaſe which ſeemed lingering and mortal, ſuddenly became violent; a criſis took place; we threw off the colonies, acknowledged their independence, and, reaſſuming the arts of peace, became in a few years more proſperous than before. In the mean time France had received a mortal wound; to *prevent the war from becoming unpopular under the exiſting burthens*, ſhe had carried it on without new taxes,

 by

Happily for England, by great and virtuous exertions, ſhe eſcaped in the year 1783 the bankruptcy which France incurred. The effects of continued peace on a nation ſuch as ours are beyond calculation. National confidence and credit being reſtored, our manufactures ſpread over the continents of the old and the new world, and our revenue roſe on *the baſis of circulation* to its late unexampled height. A paper currency of promiſſory notes and of bills of exchange was a neceſſary conſequence, and this, which ought to have repreſented ſpecie or merchandiſe only, became in a ſeaſon of ſingular proſperity the repreſentation of almoſt every kind of property fixed and unfixed.

In the mean time affairs on the continent aſſumed a hoſtile aſpect. The allied powers began to arm; France

by borrowing only. When peace came, this new debt was to be provided for—the people were poor, diſcontented, and, what was worſt of all, they were in ſome degree enlightened—the reſt is known.

The policy of the powers which are combined againſt France is of the ſame weak and fooliſh kind. The folly and the crimes of France rendered a civil war inevitable, and Europe might have looked on in ſafety and peace. This mighty people, weakened by inteſtine diviſions, would have been no longer formidable; and the proceſs of their experiments on government, if left to itſelf, would have been fruitful of leſſons of the moſt important kind. The neighbouring monarchs met at Pillnitz, and agreed to invade France the firſt *convenient opportunity*. The treaty was diſcovered; it gave victory to the republicans without a conteſt; a civil war was prevented; and the banner of Jacobiniſm reigned triumphant. The allied powers have carried their treaty into effect; but being burthened with debt already, and the ſtate of the public mind *requiring to be particularly conſulted at preſent*, they are, like France of old, carrying it on by borrowing without laying on taxes, leaving this for the ſeaſon of peace. The Emperor I am told gives nine per cent. for money, to prevent the impoſition of taxes; and yet it is ſaid that the unreaſonable people of Vienna are not ſatisfied.

So far the policy of the powers now allied againſt France, and that of France herſelf in the American war, are preciſely ſimilar—How far the effects may correſpond is in the womb of time.

armed

armed alſo. Armaments, in countries comparatively ſpeaking little commercial, required ſpecie. It probably flowed freely from England, for a paper circulation ſupplied its place. Theſe armaments rendered the people, as well as the governments, poor, by diminiſhing and oppreſſing productive labour, abſorbing the wealth that ſhould have been employed in private induſtry, and obſtructing commercial intercourſe. Hence our cuſtomers did not purchaſe, or did not pay for our manufactures, and they began to remain on our hands.

Certain circumſtances however prevented for a time our feeling the full effect of the war politics on the continent. In the firſt place we were at peace, and had declared for a peace-ſyſtem, while the reſt of Europe was agitated, and under arms. Hence our funds became a favourite object of purchaſe for thoſe monied men on the continent who wiſhed to ſecure their property; immenſe ſums, it is ſaid, flowed in from France and the Low Countries, and the prices of ſtock roſe for a time, with the decline of our export of manufactures, and the efflux, as it ſhould ſeem, of the precious metals.

Another circumſtance operated in our favour. The war on the continent increaſed the demand for particular manufactures, from Germany, and more eſpecially from France—Birmingham felt this, ſo did Yorkſhire. Burning for combat, the *Sans Culottes* ruſhed into the field—and Arms! Arms and clothing! was echoed from Picardy to Provence. Theſe demands could only be ſupplied by England. France had ruined her credit by her ſecond revolution: ſhe muſt come to market with ſpecie; and her gold and ſilver might have reſted with us.—Our true policy was clear.

By this time however the ſympathies of the different parties in England were excited to ſuch a degree by the ſtate of things on the continent, that the dictates of ſound reaſon could

could no longer be heard; and the wickedneſs of the ruling party in France having perpetrated one deliberate and dreadful murder, calculated to awake the horror of men in an extraordinary degree, the original friends of the revolution became mute; the once ſacred name of Liberty itſelf became offenſive; the alarmiſts roſe ſuddenly in numbers and force; clamours and indignation ſprung up in every quarter; and, amidſt a wild uproar of falſe terrors and of virtuous ſympathy, the nation was plunged headlong into this dreadful war!

One powerful voice indeed was heard above the ſtorm, but the accents of reaſon and truth ſounded like treaſon to an irritated people, and our rulers joined in the general outcry; the friends of peace incurred the fouleſt calumnies of the day, but ſecured to themſelves the pureſt admiration, when paſſion and prejudice ſhall be no more.

War came; and faſt on its heels a dreadful train of evils—bankruptcy followed bankruptcy in rapid ſucceſſion, our reſources ſeemed to vaniſh, diſtruſt and terror ſeiſed the mercantile world, and the Bank of England itſelf partook, as it is reported, of the general alarm. In the mean time you are ſaid to have declared in your place, that theſe evils had no connexion with the war, and Mr. Dundas aſſured us that they aroſe from our extraordinary proſperity. Similar language is made uſe of by the partizans of adminiſtration every where, and it is fit that this dreadful error ſhould be publicly unveiled.

In a ſeaſon of general peace and great proſperity, private as well as public credit had ariſen to an extraordinary height, and, from cauſes very obvious, but which it would be tedious to enumerate, paper-money became in a great meaſure the medium of circulation. This paper conſiſted of two kinds; of bills of exchange payable at different dates, and generally diſcountable; and of promiſſory notes, iſſued by the Bank of England and private Banking-houſes, payable in

ſpecie

ſpecie on demand. The credit of each of theſe depended on their repreſenting a property real and ſecure. The promiſſory notes were indeed ſuppoſed to repreſent ſpecie at all times ready on demand, but in reality reſted for their credit on the baſis of ſome fixed property within the kingdom, and frequently on landed eſtates. The bills of exchange depended for their circulation on the joint credit of the drawer and the acceptor, and repreſented in a great meaſure property out of the kingdom; perhaps on the ſeas, in the Weſt Indies, on the coaſt of Africa, in America, or on the continent of Europe *. By means of this medium a vaſt quantity of fixed property was brought, as it were, into a ſtate of activity; the paper money in circulation, every kind included, amounting, as I have been told, to a ſum that ſeems almoſt incredible †! The effects of a war on a paper medium, ſuch as I have deſcribed, may be eaſily imagined.—It muſt diminiſh the ſecurity of all property on the ſeas, in our iſlands, on the coaſt of Africa, &c. and of courſe deſtroy or impair the credit of all bills of exchange running on the validity of ſuch property. If the property itſelf during a war would not eaſily find a purchaſer, neither would a bill reſting on that property. The property itſelf however might ſtill be ſaleable, though at a diminiſhed value; but this would not be the caſe with a bill of exchange, which, if it does not paſs for the ſum it is drawn for, will paſs for nothing, and is thrown out of circulation. The manner in which this diſtreſſed our Weſt-India houſes is well known. The degree of hazard of our iſlands was perhaps over-rated, a circumſtance ariſing from the peculiar nature of the war,

* This ſubject is very elegantly and fully explained in a pamphlet intitled "Thoughts on the Cauſes of the preſent Failures," publiſhed by Johnſon.

† Two hundred millions.

and

and the fears under which we laboured, and ſtill labour, of the deſperate methods to which the French may have recourſe. Previous to the war in England, bankruptcies had begun on the continent, and the ſecurity of bills of foreign exchange was every day impaired. The invaſion of Holland by Dumourier, one of the firſt conſequences of the war, was a blow aimed at the credit of all Europe; our houſes concerned in Dutch and other foreign exchanges found their ſecurity particularly ſhaken; many of them are ſuppoſed to have tottered, and ſeveral fell. A ſimilar effect took place in various parts of the continent, and the action and reaction of ruin ſpread far and wide. The invaſion and partition of Poland contributed much to this general calamity. The Bank of Warſaw, the depoſit of all the ſurplus wealth of the landed intereſt of Poland, was oppreſſed and deſtroyed by the royal plunderers; it failed, as it is ſaid, for ten millions ſterling, and brought down with it various houſes throughout Europe, particularly in Peterſburg, Hamburg, and Amſterdam *.

The war deprived our manufactures of the French market, of all others the moſt extenſive, and, as it had been conducted for a twelvemonth paſt, by far the moſt ſafe and lucrative. The general wreck of credit among our allies on the continent deprived us in a great meaſure of the markets there. Orders did not arrive, or, if they did arrive, could not be executed; the ſecurity of the correſpondent was doubted, or the channel of payment ſhut up. It was ſoon therefore found, that our manufactures for the foreign markets had not ſuſtained a temporary check, ſuch as ariſes from overtrading every ſixth or ſeventh year of peace, but an abſolute ſtagnation; the bills and paper running on the ſecurity of the capital veſted in machinery (an enormous and lately moſt

* Fifteen houſes in Peterſburg, concerned in the trade to China, failed together.

productive

productive property) were of courſe ſhaken in their credit, and in the courſe of a few weeks, if a proſpect of peace does not open, will be of all others the moſt inſecure. If it were proper on ſuch an occaſion to bring forward names, each of theſe aſſertions might be ſupported and illuſtrated by abundant proofs.

The general reſult of theſe particulars is—That whereas, before the war, bills were diſcountable, and of courſe entered into circulation from every part of the world, at perhaps eighteen months date, and ſometimes at even longer, diſtruſt and bankruptcy have, for the preſent, rendered three-fourths of the whole waſte paper; and thoſe of the very firſt credit are in general negotiable at two months date only. The immenſe chaſm that this muſt make in circulation may be eaſily imagined.

This general diſtreſs in the commercial and manufacturing intereſts muſt, of courſe, occaſion a great preſſure on the monied men. What is their ſituation? Their property is generally veſted in public ſecurities; theſe muſt be ſold out to meet the exigence, at a loſs of from 20 to 25 per cent. Public ſecurities have already ſunk in value in conſequence of the war, to the amount of nearly fifty millions ſterling, a ſum almoſt equal to the whole of our national debt at the commencement of the war of 1755!

Land has not eſcaped deterioration; but, for obvious reaſons, except in the immediate vicinity of towns, it has ſuffered leſs than any other property; and of courſe the ſecurity of promiſſory notes iſſued by country banking-houſes, as far as they depended on landed eſtates, is, or ought to be, leſs affected than any other. In the general panic, indeed, runs have been made on almoſt every houſe of this kind; a few have failed from inſufficient ſtability, and many have ſtopped payment for want of ſpecie. But in general thoſe who have ſhewn a ſufficient foundation of real property, have been

ſupported by public confidence, and, in the abſolute ſcarcity of gold and ſilver, their notes have returned into circulation. In ſituations where this has happened, the diſtreſs is far leſs than where no circulation of ſuch promiſſory notes had taken place. It ſeems the more neceſſary to ſtate theſe facts, becauſe, in both houſes of parliament, ſome reſpectable individuals ſeem diſpoſed to impute our preſent diſtreſſes in a great meaſure to the increaſe of banking-houſes iſſuing promiſſory notes*.

It ma be obſerved, that circulating notes of this kind, each repreſenting a guinea, have long been the univerſal medium throughout Scotland, where the commercial diſtreſs, though great, is much leſs than in England; not more than one banking-houſe there having as yet failed. Five pound notes of the ſame kind are in common circulation through ſeveral of the northern counties, and, in the moment of general panic, were much exclaimed againſt. But the alarm is ſubſiding, and confidence returns †. The truth will ſoon appear to be, that a well-ſecured and well-regulated—medium of this kind is at this inſtant of eſſential ſervice where it circulates; and it is very probable that it will be reſorted to in ſituations where it has not yet been adopted. In Lancaſhire, where the diſtreſs both in the commercial and manufacturing intereſts is perhaps greater than in any part of the kingdom, promiſſory notes were never iſſued by any of the banking-houſes; and to this, I will venture to ſay, the univerſal ſtagnation there is in ſome degree to be attributed. The neceſſity of reſorting to a paper-money generally, which cannot be immediately commuted into ſpecie, would indeed be a proof of extraordinary diſtreſs, but it may one day come. There is a ſituation that a good citizen muſt brood over in ſilence,

* The Duke of Norfolk is one who has fallen into this miſtake.

† See the proceedings at Newcaſtle, Whitehaven, &c.

but

but which the rapid career of our adverſity does not [illegible] be long abſent from his thoughts, in which it may be the only national remedy againſt general ruin and confuſion.

Though the banking-houſes which circulate promiſſory notes have not contributed in any conſiderable degree to our preſent diſtreſs, it muſt be admitted that it has been aggravated by the imprudence of individuals in over-trading their capitals, and reſorting in ſeveral inſtances to the ſyſtem of drawing and redrawing for ſupporting their credit*. This however is a diſeaſe which has a conſtant tendency to ariſe in ſeaſons of great proſperity, and which, though it operate ſeverely on particular places, cannot be conſidered as entering largely into our national diſtreſs:—not having been without its effect, it gives I preſume a colour to the aſſertion of Mr. Dundas; but will even Mr. Dundas ſay, that the imprudence of a few individuals has deſtroyed the whole market of our manufactures, or lowered the funds fifty millions?

To this general repreſentation an objection will perhaps occur, that it explains things too clearly; that events can ſeldom be traced in this regular way; and that politics do not afford any thing ſo nearly approaching to demonſtration. The reply to this is eaſy—Politics have generally for their object the conduct of cabinets; and the uncertainty to which they are liable is chiefly to be imputed to the ignorance and caprice by which cabinets are governed. Hence the difficulty of predicting how they may act ariſes from the impoſſibility of foreſeeing, with any certainty, their motives of action. But that part of the political œconomy which unfolds the theory of trade and manufactures, approaches to the nature of ſcience, becauſe it has the inter-

* Thoſe who wiſh to ſee this clearly and fully explained, may conſult the Wealth of Nations, laſt edition.

courſe of commercial men for its object, who are conſtantly governed by a ſenſe of intereſt, the moſt uniform motive of human conduct. We diſtinguiſh ill, if we ſuppoſe that what reſpects commerce is equally uncertain with what reſpects politics; the freaks of the miſchievous monkey are indeed wild and capricious, but the actions of the induſtrious beaver are uniform and exact*. It may alſo be objected to this explanation of the cauſes of our diſtreſs, that it is founded on principles which apply to former wars as well as to that we are engaged in, while our preſent calamities are altogether ſingular and unprecedented. It muſt be admitted that our diſtreſſes are ſingular in degree, but they are not ſingular in their nature; in the commencement of all our wars, induſtry and credit have ſuſtained a ſimilar blow, and it only remains to be ſhewn why the preſent ſhock is ſo peculiarly ſevere and tremendous.

That the entrance of war has always injured our commercial proſperity, may be proved from the authentic documents in Mr. Chalmers's "Comparative Eſtimate;" and thoſe who remember the commencement of the laſt war, muſt alſo recollect the diſtreſs which it occaſioned. The extraordinary ruin of the preſent moment, compared with that of 1755 or 1775, is to be traced to the change which this nation, as well as the other nations of Europe, has been gradually undergoing, and to the peculiar nature and feat of the exiſting warfare. At the breaking out of the war in 1755, the debt of Great Britain amounted to ſeventy-two

* Though this figure is not very reſpectful, it is not perhaps inaccurate. Compare the beavers who have raiſed their mounds in Holland, with the monkies who adminiſtered the old government of France. As to the tygers of the preſent day, they ſeem to be under the influence of blind inſtinct; but the ſame remark is applicable to the Ruſſian bear, the German eagle, and the other birds and beaſts of prey.

millions;

millions; and now the debt funded and unfunded is nearly two hundred and fifty millions. We ſet out on the preſent occaſion under an additional weight of almoſt two hundred millions!

But let us take the commencement of the laſt war, a period ſtill freſh in our recollections, and when the diſparity of ſituation was not ſo great. In the beginning of February, you held out a proſpect that the exiſting revenue was not likely to fall off in conſequence of the preſent hoſtilities, becauſe in the firſt year of the laſt war it was not much affected. You ſeemed to admit that the *progreſs* of our commerce and manufactures might indeed be ſtopped, but you did not apprehend there would be much, if any, diminution of what we already poſſeſſed. The melancholy records of the laſt three months have detected this fatal error, to which perhaps the war itſelf is in ſome degree owing, and, painful as is the office, there may yet be ſome advantage in tracing it to its ſource. The American war commenced in a gradual manner—Our diſputes with the coloniſts had been of ſeveral years continuance, and before hoſtilities broke out our merchants had foreſeen them and provided againſt them. The proviſion, it is true, was far from complete; for though in the year immediately preceding the war very unuſual remittances were made from America, yet, on the opening of hoſtilities, a large capital was locked up in that country, by which the trade of London, Briſtol, and Liverpool, was conſiderably injured, and at Glaſgow and Whitehaven a very extenſive bankruptcy took place. A circumſtance however diſtinguiſhed thoſe times from the preſent, which is of material importance.—Previous to the war of 1775, our manufacturers were not much in the habit of exporting on their own accounts. They received their orders chiefly from the merchants here, at whoſe riſque the manufactures were ſhipped; ſo that though the mercantile houſes received a

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ſevere blow in the rupture with America, the manufacturing capital was, comparatively ſpeaking, little injured. What contributed a good deal to this, was the prohibition of importation laid by the American Congreſs the year before the war, at a time when remittances to this country were allowed, and were ſo conſiderable. In conſequence of this, our manufacturers, with their ſkill and their capitals unimpaired, began early to explore new markets, and to improve thoſe already known; and from this date commenced that rapid increaſe of export to the continent of Europe, which ſaved us from national bankruptcy, and raiſed us again to our rank among nations. It was ſoon found that the American market was, comparatively ſpeaking, of little value; and it was found alſo, that the ſuperiority of our manufactures forced their way into it, notwithſtanding the obſtructions of the war. They took a circuitous courſe indeed through Holland; but Yorkſhire furniſhed the greater part of the clothing of the Sans Culottes of America; and though they had ſet up a republican government, and were rebels, not againſt Louis XVI. but our own gracious King—no Traitorous Correſpondence Bill was moved for by the Attorney General of the day*.

Since the laſt peace however our manufacturers have almoſt univerſally acted as merchants, and ſhipped their

* It was during this period, if my memory does not fail me, that the Duke of Richmond, who has been ſo loyally employed of late in fortifying the Tower, was accuſed in the miniſterial papers of having ſurveyed ſome parts of the coaſt, for the purpoſe of directing the French where they might with ſafety attack us; it was at this time that Mr. Burke openly boaſted in the Houſe of Commons, of correſponding with the republican-rebel Franklin, intriguing at Paris to bring all Europe on our heads; it was during the ſame calamitous period that a young Statеſman, ſince ſo well known throughout Europe, began his career, by juſtifying the republicans of America in their reſiſtance, and reprobating, as the height of wickedneſs and inſanity, our deſign of ſubjugating them by force.

goods

goods on their own account. They have gained poſſeſſion of the foreign markets, in part from the ſuperiority of their ſkill, but far more from the ſuperiority of their capital, which has enabled them to give a credit almoſt every where from twelve to eighteen months. Hence at the preſent moment our manufacturing capital (contrary to what happened in the beginning of the laſt war) is in a great meaſure inveſted in foreign debts. The merchants in the ports of the kingdom felt the calamities of war ſooneſt; but it is on the manufacturing body that it will fall with the moſt unrelenting ruin. What adds to the diſtreſs of the moment is, that the war was not, like the American conteſt, long foreſeen. We had declared for a peace-ſyſtem; it was clearly our intereſt to maintain it; it ſeemed almoſt ſuicide in France to provoke a quarrel: mercantile men in both kingdoms deprecated a rupture, and, reaſoning on the grounds of mutual intereſt (the familiar and fundamental principle of plain and ſenſible men), they could not believe, long after the horizon began to darken, that a ſtorm would enſue—When the clouds burſt, they were therefore naked and unprepared.

The difference in the ſituation of our public burthens is alſo to be conſidered in comparing the two periods; we commenced the war with America under a debt of 130 millions; and we ſtart now with a debt of 250:—our peace eſtabliſhment, the intereſt of the debt included, was then ten millions annually; it has now mounted to ſeventeen millions.

It may however be ſuppoſed that our ability to pay theſe increaſed burthens has increaſed in a proportional degree—I would not undervalue the reſources of my country, and I believe this to be true; but it is only true while we continue at peace, and preſerve as much as poſſible the peace of the world. If indeed our ability to pay taxes were meaſured by the ſtate of our exports, it might be juſtly doubted whether

it has augumented in the degree that is ſuppoſed *. But this ability depends in reality on the exceſs of our productive labour over our wants; and the facility of collecting taxes, a point very important, depends in a great meaſure on the degree of conſumption and circulation.—The exceſs of our productive labour does not appear in our exports, as ſome are apt to ſuppoſe, for much of it has been employed in the creation of new capital—in the increaſe of buildings and machinery—in the improvement of the ſoil—and in the opening of new roads and canals, of all modes of employing the national capital by far the moſt uſeful †. Theſe improvements were going on with a moſt happy and accelerated progreſs; our public burthens were beginning to decreaſe with the increaſe of our power of bearing them; and England advanced rapidly towards that ultimate point of proſperity, the poſſibility of which was demonſtrated by Dr. A. Smith with a mathematical preciſion; and its approach predicted by yourſelf in a ſtrain of eloquence that gave to truth all the charms

* The average of our exports for the laſt ten years does not, it is ſaid, exceed ſeventeen millions; which is not more than three millions greater than the amount they averaged in an equal number of years before the American war. The documents on this ſubject however are not ſufficient for accurate ſtatement.

See *Mr. Chalmers's Comparative Eſtimate.*

† In Lancaſhire alone, one million of the profits of manufactures and commerce is about to be inveſted in canals now forming there, if the diſtreſſes of the times permit the ſubſcriptions to be paid; and ſuch of the labouring manufacturers as are employed at all, are now chiefly employed in forming theſe canals. The happy effects of ſuch an application of capital in a ſingle county, and ſuch a county as Lancaſhire, no one can eſtimate, but they depend almoſt entirely on peace. The war has already ſunk the value of ſhares in this property greatly, and it has diminiſhed the carriage on the canals already made, more than one half. On this ſubject authentic information may be obtained from the Duke of Bridgewater. I ſpeak on the authority of a well-informed correſpondent.

of

of fiction, and unfolded to an admiring nation, a proſpect of real happineſs, ſuppoſed only to exiſt in the poet's dream * ! You knew, however, and you acknowledged, that the continuation of peace was neceſſary to enſure the bleſſings you foretold—happy had it been for the nation, if you had ſeen that it was indiſpenſable to the duration of thoſe we already enjoyed !

It has been imagined by many, that the preſent war ought to be light in compariſon of the laſt, becauſe then we fought alone, and now all the world is in alliance with us. Mr. Dundas in the Houſe of Commons boaſted of this; and declared the intention of miniſtry was to bring, if poſſible, every nation of Europe upon Franee. It is, I preſume, in conſequence of the operations of this policy, before it was avowed, that Spain and Pruſſia are now in arms, and that Portugal, Turkey, and the Northern Powers, are openly ſolicited to join the general confederacy—Weak and miſerable policy ! Better far had it been for Britain to have fought France ſingly, if her power had been twice as great, while the reſt of Europe looked on, than to ſtir up and mingle in this general cruſade of folly and ruin. I ſpeak not in the language of a moraliſt, but of a politician; and of this aſſertion I challenge the moſt rigid examination.—What ſupported us during the American war ? the export of our manufactures to countries that could purchaſe them, becauſe they enjoyed the bleſſings of peace. But who is there now to buy our manufactures ? where is peace now to be found ? The nations of Europe are in arms from the White Sea to the Pillars of Hercules, and in the courſe of the ſummer there will be upwards of two millions of men in the field. Ancient or modern hiſtory ſtates

* See Mr. Pitt's ſpeech, 17th Feb. 1792, on his motion for taking off a part of our taxes.

nothing equal to the expenſe or the extent of this armament, undertaken when the funds of all the belligerent powers are anticipated and exhauſted, and national credit is everywhere (England I hope excepted) about to explode. If the whole population of Europe be a hundred and twenty millions, it will contain twenty-five or thirty millions of men fit for labour, or what are called fighting men. Of this number there is a 12th or 15th part taken from a productive labour to that which produces nothing; or, what illuſtrates the point more clearly, brought into the ſame ſituation with reſpect to the public as if the whole became paralytic in a day, and yet required not only the ſame ſubſiſtence as when capable of labour, but one much more expenſive. But as the men called into the field are in the flower of life, the productive labour diminiſhed will be more than in proportion to their numbers; and as they are to combat far from home, the expenſe of their maintenance while ſoldiers will double and treble what mere ceſſation from labour would have produced. The ſtock of productive labour muſt however not only be ſubject to all former burthens, but oppreſſed with the maintenance of the labourers taken from it and turned into ſoldiers, and thus the loſs will be more than doubled. It is poſſible that in ſome parts of Europe famine may ariſe, but this is not likely to be a general or an immediate effect. Subſiſtence is ſuch an evident want, and ſuch an irreſtible call, that the ground will always be cultivated in the firſt inſtance. The labourers taken from agriculture for the field, will have their places ſupplied by others deprived of their uſual labour in manufactures, which the war has injured or ruined; and poverty, by teaching men leſs expenſive habits both of diet and clothing, will protract the hour of abſolute want. It is in the ſeat of war only that famine may be conſidered as inevitable; it is there alſo that diſeaſe may ſoon be expected; contagion will ſcatter her poiſon, and deſtroy more than the ſword. The

elaſticity

elaſticity of human exertions cannot be exactly calculated; and it would be raſh to predict, how, or to what extent theſe may operate under burthens ſo heavy and ſo general. It ſeems however unavoidable that, during the continuance of the war, theſe burthens muſt every where increaſe. If the ſupport of life becomes even difficult, the collection of revenue will become impoſſible: from the ſhrivelled muſcles and dried bones of their ſtarving peaſantry, the conquerors of Poland and the invaders of France will not be able to extract the ſupport of their ſenſeleſs ambition and fooliſh waſte.

It is evident that this general poverty muſt operate peculiarly, and every day more heavily, on Britain. Since the laſt war this country has become the ſtore-houſe of the nations of Europe, and has furniſhed almoſt the whole ſtock of the ſuperfluities they have been enabled to buy. We ſee clearly that it is the conſumption of theſe ſuperfluities which the war muſt firſt deſtroy; experience has rendered this truth inconteſtible. Thoſe who live by the manufacture of theſe ſuperfluities, muſt therefore be the firſt and greateſt ſufferers in every part of Europe, and unfortunately the greater part of this deſcription of men live here. Here then the ruin muſt be moſt ſeverely felt, and our ſufferings will be the greater and the harder to bear, becauſe they will be in the exact proportion of our former *proſperity*. It is very clear then, that had we even ourſelves continued at peace, while the other belligerent powers were at war, we ſhould have ſuffered much from the progreſs of univerſal poverty.—There are however advantages attending ſuch a ſituation, which, with prudent management, might have born us through the difficulties. We ſhould have ſupplied the clothing of the various armies in the field; we ſhould have enjoyed a monopoly of the ſale of arms, artillery, and the other means of deſtruction; we ſhould have become the univerſal carriers of proviſions and warlike ſtores; we ſhould

have been enabled to convey our own manufactures in ſafety wherever any ſale for them remained; and we ſhould have been ſaved the enormous and deſtructive expenſe of arming and protecting our extended commerce in the different quarters of the globe. Our poſſeſſions in the eaſt and in the weſt would have remained ſecure, and the credit of our paper circulation continued unimpaired. While the ſtorm raged on the land, England might have declared the ocean inviolable; and if the warring powers had diſturbed it, ſhe might have reared her head above the waves, extended her immortal trident, and bid the tempeſt be ſtill *. Holding in her poſſeſſion a great part of the clothing, the arms, and the ſtores of the powers at war, and being at the ſame time the undiſputed miſtreſs of the ſea, and the great channel of intercourſe between nations—when the ſtrength and fury of conflicting paſſions were fated with blood, or ſubdued with ſlaughter, ſhe might have denounced her vengeance on the aggreſſors, have offered her ſuccours to the oppreſſed, and dictated the term of univerſal peace.—Such our ſituation might have been—nay, muſt have been, had we not become parties in the general ſtrife. What is our ſituation now? We are involved ourſelves in the quarrel; there is no nation of Europe left to mediate between the conflicting powers; and if England does not again aſſume the office of umpire, nothing but the extermination of the French, or the downfall of the governments of Germany, ſeems capable of ſatisfying the enraged parties, or reſtoring the peace of the world. But it may be ſaid, it is better for us to fight France now with all the world with us, than to fight her hereafter alone. Why ſhould we fight her at all?—it is not our intereſt. But it

* Maturate fugam, regique hæc dicite veſtro:
Non illi imperium pelagi, ſaevumque tridentem;
Sed mihi ſorte datum.——— VIRGIL. ÆN. I.

may

may be ſuppoſed that the ambition of France, when her government is ſettled, will compel us to go to war in ſelf-defence. I do not think this likely, becauſe it cannot be *her* intereſt; but we will allow the ſuppoſition. If France attack us, it muſt be on the ſea, our favourite element, and there ſhe will, I doubt not, find our ſuperiority once more.—There ſhe found our ſuperiority in the American conteſt, though ſhe employed her whole reſources on her marine, though ſhe was aided by Spain, Holland and America, and though ſhe attacked us when we were in ſome degree exhauſted by three expenſive and bloody campaigns.

If France and England combat alone, it muſt be on the ſea, and deſtructive though the conteſt muſt be, it is not likely of itſelf either to endanger our conſtitution or deſtroy our credit, as ſome have weakly ſuppoſed. Our conſtitution is enthroned in the hearts of Engliſhmen, and will never be deſtroyed by foreign force; our credit depends on our commerce, but more eſpecially on our manufactures, which we know by experience can ſurvive a rupture with France, and even increaſe during its continuance, *provided the reſt of Europe is at peace* *. Unfortunately at preſent all Europe is not only engaged in war, but in a war of unexampled deſperation and expenſe, at a time when public debts and taxes have accumulated to an enormous degree in almoſt every one of the belligerent powers; where the governments (that of our own country always excepted) are univerſally oppreſſive, and the people poor and wretched.

* I would not however be underſtood to conſider a war with France, or with any other country, in any other light under our circumſtances, than in that of a moſt ſerious calamity. I wiſh to point out the peculiarity in the preſent war, that makes it to us particularly deſtructive. It is the general ſtate of warfare, and the conſequent poverty, that is our bane. In regard to ſome of the powers now under arms, if they are to be at war, it is of little conſequence to us, as to the actual force they can bring forward, whether they fight with or againſt us.

Fifty

Fifty years ago, Mr. Hume, treating on the effects of public credit, obſerved, that it muſt either deſtroy the nation, or the nation muſt deſtroy it. "I muſt confeſs," ſays this profound obſerver, "when I ſee princes and ſtates "quarrelling, amidſt their debts, funds, and public mort-"gages, it always brings to my mind a match of cudgel-"playing fought in a china ſhop *." Since the time this was written, the public debts of the European nations have been more than doubled, taking the whole together, and thoſe of France, Britain, and Ruſſia, have increaſed almoſt fourfold. The figure of Mr. Hume may now perhaps be a little altered. The preſent match of cudgel-playing is indeed in a china-ſhop, but the walls of the houſe are now become china alſo. If the performers get very warm in the buſineſs, they may therefore not only deſtroy the moveables, but bring the houſe itſelf about their ears.

I heard a member in the Houſe of Commons pleading with great eloquence for our plunging into the war with France, and call out—Periſh our commerce, if it muſt periſh, but let our conſtitution live!—The words were fooliſh:—the ſeparation is no longer poſſible. The vital principle of our conſtitution—the diviſion and diſtribution of its powers, may indeed ſurvive the ruin of commerce; and provided the whole people be enlightened, it may be perpetuated after the wreck of our power. The ſpirit of our religion may be preſerved after the decay of our riches, and poverty and ſorrow may even render it more pure. The equal principle of our laws, now contained and exemplified in five hundred volumes in folio, may appear perhaps as beautiful, when the deſtruction of property ſhall have rendered 499 volumes of ſtatutes obſolete, and a ſingle volume compriſes all that our poverty demands. But the bleſſings of our conſtitution, in the eye of thoſe who adminiſter, or hope to adminiſter its

* Eſſay on Public Credit.

powers,

powers, depend, I conceive, on our opulence, and muſt periſh with the commerce from which that opulence flows. Let thoſe therefore who wiſh for *things as they are*, beware of war: true patriots, who abhor civil convulſions, will cheriſh the arts of peace.

"Periſh our commerce"—fooliſh words! What affords three millions annually to the poor? A million and a half annually to the church? What ſupplies a million to the civil liſt?—Our commerce. What ſupports the expenſe of our immenſe naval and military eſtabliſhments? All our places and penſions?—What but our commerce? Thirteen millions of our taxes depend on circulation and conſumption, and this thoughtleſs ſenator cries out—"Periſh our commerce, let our conſtitution live!" But how then muſt the neceſſary ſplendour, the patronage, and the far more extenſive influence of the crown be ſupported? And if this ſplendour, patronage, and influence are ſwept away—where is our conſtitution? What ſhall maintain the crown againſt a band of factious nobles cajoling the people with the ſound of liberty to cover their ſelfiſh ambition; or what ſhall defend hereditary honours and property of every kind againſt the great maſs of the nation, now become poor, and therefore deſperate; ravenous, perhaps, from their wants, and terrible from the remainder of ſpirit and pride which has deſcended from better times *?

Our conſtitution and our commerce have grown up together; their connection was not at firſt a neceſſary one perhaps, but events have rendered it ſuch; the peace and the ſafety of England depend on its being preſerved. Our very habits and manners, and the ſtructure of ſociety among us, are founded on this union. I know the evils of our ſituation, but the heavy load of our debts and taxes muſt teach us to ſubmit. Patience, peace, œconomy, and gradual re-

* The author can throw out hints only at preſent; but in favour of the prerogative of the crown, as things are ſituated, he has much to offer.

formation,

formation, are the remedies that wiſe men would point out; the chance of more dangerous means being reſorted to ariſes from the folly of one claſs, who deny theſe evils, and by denying aggravate them; and from the folly of another, who pronounce them intolerable, and would liſten to the counſels of enthuſiaſts or knaves. At preſent, never was a nation more ſubmiſſive, or more loyal; but a wiſe miniſter will not wantonly try our patience or goad us too much.

"Periſh our commerce!"—Let the member for Norwich correct his expreſſion. We will excuſe the inaccuracy of an ardent and eloquent mind; we will even make allowance for the prejudices of education—In the ſchool of Mr. Burke, trade and manufactures are words that ſound meanly: among the Jeſuits of St. Omer's, the words themſelves were perhaps unknown. Early education, natural taſte, and peculiar ſublimity of imagination, have made, I preſume, the detail and the exactneſs of commerce diſguſting to Mr. Burke; and have furniſhed his mind with thoſe grand and obſcure ideas, that aſſociate with the lofty manners of chivalry, and the Gothic gloom of a darker age. Hence, probably (ſince time, by extinguiſhing ambition, has reſtored the original habits of his mind), we are to explain his ſtrong preference of the feudal relicks of our conſtitution, and his dread of the progreſs of commerce, as leading to innovation and change. I do not wiſh to break a lance with the champion of ariſtocracy, or with any of his followers; and I would concede in their favour as much as truth will admit. If our ſociety were to be caſt anew, if the intereſts of our country were alone to be conſulted, and the means were entirely at our command—much as commerce is to be valued, it would be wiſer and better to give it leſs ſhare in our proſperity, and at all events to render our revenue independent of foreign trade. How far it might be deſirable to control its effects on our manners, and on our habits of thinking,

thinking, is a queſtion that I cannot enter on at preſent. Conſulting our taſte, and ſetting moral conſiderations aſide, we ſhould perhaps be willing to preſerve a greater degree of correctneſs and purity of manners, and more of the nice and high-ſpirited ſenſe of honour, than commerce generally admits. But if we try different characters by the teſt of utility, and found this teſt on the actual ſtate of the nation, the knight of chivalry and his various offſpring, compared to the modern manufacturer or the merchant, ſeem weak and uſeleſs things. Even the country gentleman of England, the moſt reſpectable character of all thoſe *lilies of the valley who neither toil nor ſpin*, ſinks in this compariſon. The proprietor of landed property, who lives on the income of his eſtates, can in general be conſidered only as the conduit that conveys the wealth of one generation to another. He is a neceſſary link in ſociety indeed, but his place can at all times be eaſily ſupplied: in this point of view the poor peaſant who cultivates his eſtate is of more importance than he. How then ſhall we eſtimate him when compared with a reſpectable manufacturer—with the original genius, for inſtance, who has found means to convert our clay into porcelain, and lays all Europe under contribution to England by his genius, taſte, and ſkill? Or what rank will he take, when his exertions are put in competition with the power and enterpriſe of the merchant, whoſe ſhips viſit the moſt remote ſhores and nations; to whom the coaſts of Aſia and America are familiar; who draws his wealth from the wilds of Nootka or Labrador, and who makes the diſtant Pacific yield up its ſtores? Even in his more elevated ſituation in the houſe of commons, the country gentleman, however eloquent and virtuous (Mr. Wyndham himſelf), muſt not be compared, as an object of national conſequence, with a character like this.

To the conſiderations which I have offered on the im-

portance of commerce and manufactures, and on the effects already produced on them by the war, you, Sir, if you were more in the habit of explaining miniſterial conduct, might perhaps reply—That the war is a war of neceſſity—that it is likely to be ſhort and ſucceſsful—and that, at all events, the dignity of the nation (the phraſe uſed in the American war), or perhaps of the crown (for this is now the more correct expreſſion of Lord Grenville), is concerned in carrying it on. On each of theſe points I mean to offer a few obſervations. I will then endeavour to ſhew the ſtate the nation is likely to be in, on the receſs of parliament; I will make ſome obſervations on the terrible reſponſibility that miniſters aſſume, and conclude with one or two remarks addreſſed more particularly to yourſelf.

The war was neceſſary, as its ſupporters ſay; and this neceſſity is explained in different ways.—By a few it is aſſerted, that the French were determined to quarrel with us, and that they declared war againſt us at a time when it was unexpected and unprovoked. This language however is held by very few, and is indeed ſo utterly inconſiſtent both with fact and probability, that nothing but ignorance or diſingenuouſneſs can employ it. The French were fighting, or thought they were fighting, for their national exiſtence, againſt a combination of the moſt alarming kind—To what purpoſe ſhould they add England to the number of their enemies?—England, whoſe power they knew by fatal experience—whoſe irreſiſtible force on the ocean they had repeatedly ſunk under—and whoſe neutrality ſeemed almoſt eſſential to their procuring the means of carrying on the war. If it be aſſerted that they hoped to excite commotions among us, peace ſeemed neceſſary to this ſcheme; for during peace only could they carry on the intercourſe which ſuch a plan would require. Idle threats of internal commotions were indeed thrown out by ſome individuals among them; but that theſe commotions

commotions would be directly promoted by an open war, this, could only be ſincerely expected by men who were before inſane. It may however be ſaid, that inſanity did in reality pervade their councils, or thoſe at leaſt by whom their councils were influenced; and indeed this ſuppoſition ſeems in a great meaſure founded on truth. But the reply to this is clear: how far ſoever their inſanity might go, it did not extend to a war with England, a calamity not only deprecated by their rulers, but by the whole body of the people. There is not an individual who has been in France ſince the revolution, who will not confirm this truth*. The manner in which this fierce nation humbled itſelf to England in negociation, was indeed very remarkable; and though in a moment of wounded pride, the actual declaration of war came from them, yet they ſoon repented of their conduct, and are now openly renewing their endeavours, one might almoſt ſay, their ſolicitations, for peace†. Peace and war, Mr. Pitt, were in your choice—they are in your choice now; you made your election of the latter—you adhere to it—to the late application of Le Brun, it is ſaid, you have not even vouchſafed an anſwer.

It might ſeem, indeed, from the whole of your conduct towards France for a twelvemonth paſt, that England had a particular intereſt in the continuance of war; or, if ſhe is ſuppoſed to be too proud to be governed by her ſenſe of intereſt, that her honour was concerned in the keeping up of

* The National Aſſembly had probably been deceived reſpecting the ſentiments of the people of this country, but previous to the war they had diſcovered their error. The decree of the 19th November might perhaps be ſomewhat influenced by their notion of the exiſtence of a republican ſpirit here, and in this reſpect the addreſſes from different bodies of Engliſhmen did great miſchief. But the effects of the proclamation had ſhewn the real temper of the nation in a clear and ſtriking light, and this was well underſtood in France when they were negociating for peace.

† See the Letters of M. Le Brun to Lord Grenville, Star, 22d May.

hoſtilities, or her paſſions gratified by the continuance of deſtruction.

It is well known that the treaty of Pillnitz was the ſource of all the preſent hoſtilities; and it might have been foreſeen that an attempt to carry it into effect would produce a great part of the calamities which have enſued. At the time that this took place, the conſtitution of France was ſettled; the king and the people had ſworn to obey it. There was in it a good deal to praiſe, and much to blame; but, for reaſons which it would be uſeleſs to detail, it was on the whole impracticable. The men of talents and influence in France had however ſeen their error in weakening the executive power too much; they were rallying round the throne; and the army, headed by the pureſt and moſt popular character in the nation, were acquiring every day more and more military habits and virtues. The conſtitution, with all its faults, had produced the moſt ſenſible advantages to the labouring part of the people *; it contained within itſelf the means of correcting both its principles and practice; and there was perhaps a chance that theſe might have been remedied without a civil war. It is however far more probable that a civil war muſt have enſued; but if the parties had been left to themſelves, there is no one will deny that Fayette and his friends, in poſſeſſion of all the conſtitutional authorities, would in all human probability have been victorious, and the ill-fated monarch have preſerved his life and his crown. In the mean time the reſt of Europe might have reſted in peace—the conſtitution, modelled perhaps on our own, would have aſſumed a more practicable and conſiſtent form, and liberty been eſtabliſhed on law.

The danger to which the final triumph of the new conſtitution was expoſed, aroſe from a foreign war If the neigh-

* See the Tour of Mr. Arthur Young.

bouring nations ſhould attempt an invaſion of France for the avowed purpoſe of reſtoring its ancient government, from that inſtant it was evident that the conſtitution and the king himſelf were in extreme hazard. By the conſtitution, the whole means of the nation's defence againſt this invaſion muſt be truſted in the hands of the king himſelf, to replace whom in unlimited power the invaſion was made. Among a people intoxicated with liberty, and jealous in the extreme, it was impoſſible that any wiſdom could in ſuch circumſtances ſecure an already ſuſpected monarch from the imputation of treachery. As the danger from this treachery became greater, the paſſions of the people aroſe; when the Duke of Brunſwick entered France, they burſt into open inſurrection, and through a ſcene of dreadful ſlaughter the conſtitution was overturned, and the monarch dethroned. This criſis was foreſeen by the Jacobins, and by every means provoked; it was foreſeen by the Feuillans (the true friends of liberty and of limited monarchy), and earneſtly deprecated. The virtuous monarch himſelf was ſenſible of his danger, and in his extreme diſtreſs applied to England to avert it. It was evident that the Emperor would not venture on this invaſion without the aid of our ally the king of Pruſſia, who had no more pretence for attacking France, than for his invaſion of Poland, in which ſuch flagrant wickedneſs and ſuch deteſtable hypocriſy have been openly diſplayed. The unhappy Louis intreated our interference to detach the king of Pruſſia from his deſign, in language the moſt preſſing and moſt pathetic. Such an opportunity of exerting great power on a moſt ſublime occaſion, and to the nobleſt of purpoſes, is not likely to recur in a ſingle age, and is reſerved by providence for its choiceſt favourites. Such an opportunity was preſented to you, and you weakly and blindly caſt it away.

The language which you put into your ſovereign's mouth on that occaſion is on record.—Profeſſing every good wiſh

wiſh for the king of France, mankind were then told, that the king of England could not interfere, unleſs he was requeſted by all the parties concerned; that is, not only by him in diſtreſs, but by thoſe alſo whoſe conduct occaſioned the danger! The conſpirators at Pillnitz, and the Jacobins of Paris, equally triumphed on this occaſion.—The conſtitution and liberties of France were the objects of their common attack. At the ſame inſtant foreign war and internal inſurrection fell with all their furies on the friends of the king, of law, and of order; the ſtreets and the priſons of Paris overflowed with their blood; and thoſe who eſcaped the daggers of the Jacobins were ſeized on the frontier by our ally of Pruſſia, loaded with chains, and ſent to the dungeon of Magdeburg, to periſh in ſilence, or ſuffer in hopeleſs captivity worſe than death can inflict. Gratified in the deſtruction of their common enemy, the votaries of ſuperſtition and of enthuſiaſm have met in dreadful conflict; a war of unexampled fury has enſued; and after the ſacrifice of a hundred thouſand lives, the flower of the youth of France and Germany, the hoſtile armies are preciſely in the ſame ſituation as when the carnage began!

Another opportunity had in the mean time offered for England to interfere, and to reſtore the peace of Europe.—Winter produced a temporary ſuſpenſion of hoſtilities. It is well known that Pruſſia, baffled and worn out, wiſhed, during this armiſtice, to make its peace with France, and that Spain was about to ſettle its difference with her alſo. Auſtria, left alone, was unequal to the conteſt, and by our mediation peace might have been reſtored.—Difficulties had indeed occurred: France had not only repelled her invaders, but had in her turn become the aggreſſor, and Flanders had been over-run by the arms of the victorious republic. The poſſeſſion of Flanders by France might not only weaken Auſtria too much (I uſe the language of politicians), but expoſe Holland

land to be invaded and over-run.—France muſt therefore be induced to renounce Brabant. In the mean time there were new difficulties in the way of negociating with France, from the change which had taken place in its government. Thoſe who had hardly been able to ſee with patience the repreſentative of the conſtitutional king, could not be expected to receive with kindneſs the delegate of the new republic. If however we treated at all, it muſt be with thoſe who held the reins of government, men, it muſt be acknowledged, againſt whom the feelings of almoſt every heart in England revolted. A miniſter is, however, to conſult his reaſon, not his feelings, and to liſten only to the intereſts of his country. If theſe require peace, his duty is to procure it by every fair and reaſonable means; and, if he treats at all, to treat with temper, even though his opponents are *robbers in their cave.* If war, on the other hand, be inevitable, his buſineſs is evident—to refuſe all negociation, and to let looſe the whole force of the ſtate. You took a middle courſe: the dangers of war could not be altogether overlooked. You would treat therefore, but under a delicate diſtinction, which was to appear to our allies as if we did not treat at all; and, as it ſhould ſeem, to ſecure your honour, you ſet out in the buſineſs with *refuſing the right of your antagoniſts to hold a treaty.* Le Brun and his aſſociates however ſubmitted; it is known that they were ready to have renounced Brabant, rather than go to war with England; and univerſal peace was perhaps once more in your power. By this time however the nation was inflamed to a great degree by the apprehenſion of internal conſpiracies; and the dreadful anathemas of Mr. Burke in the houſe of commons had deſtroyed all temper and moderation. From Mr. Fox the mention of peace with France had been received almoſt with execration, and England was pervaded with the ſpirit of the ancient cruſades. In this ſituation every moment became more critical—you heſitated—negociation

was

was one day begun and the next abandoned—Standing on the brink of a precipice, you dallied with the temper of two inflamed nations, and were puſhed forwards into this bloody war. If you did not act as a great ſtateſman on this occaſion, ſome apology may be found for you—your temper was perhaps irritated; your ſenſe of honour and your feelings of ſympathy outraged; and though the miniſter cannot be pardoned, the man may ſtand excuſed. Deeply as I lament the war and its conſequences, I muſt fairly admit, that the madneſs of the moment renders it doubtful, whether it could have been avoided during the laſt days of negociation, by any meaſures in your power. Indeciſion is certainly not a part of your character in ſeaſons of difficulty or danger; but on this occaſion it ſeems fairly to be imputed to you; and to this it was owing that the *alarmiſts* had taken the nation out of your hands.

Without imputing bad motives to thoſe who ſtood forward to propagate the rumours of internal ſedition and conſpiracy on that occaſion, it may now, I think, be ſaid pretty confidently, that their fears greatly magnified the real danger. Why they were terrified, and why their terrors were in a great meaſure vain, may be eaſily underſtood by any one acquainted with human nature, who looks at all the events of that period with an impartial eye. The retreat of the Duke of Brunſwick, the battle of Jemappe, and the conqueſt of Flanders came ſo rapidly and ſo unexpectedly upon us, that men who had blindly wiſhed, and weakly predicted, the immediate ſubjugation of France to the Pruſſian arms, were ſeized with a ſudden terror proportioned to their fooliſh hopes. France, marching with giant ſtrides over her frontier, ſeemed to threaten the world. Thoſe who in the firſt inſtance had not taken into their calculation the force of enthuſiaſm acting on a great and powerful nation in a moment of external invaſion, could not, it may reaſonably be ſuppoſed, form any

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juſt opinion of its nature or extent; and ſaw in their frightened imaginations, not only the downfall of the deſpotic governments of Europe, but the overthrow of our own happy conſtitution, the ſource of ſo many bleſſings, and the well-earned purchaſe of more than one revolution, and of many years of civil war. On the other hand, the ſurpriſing ſucceſs of the French raiſed to a high elevation of ſpirits all thoſe who, from whatever motives, had intereſted themſelves in their favour; and the claſſic grace with which the ſpear of Liberty was wielded at Jemappe, threw a momentary veil over former proceedings, too foul to bear the light. In this ſituation of things, it was impoſſible that parties feeling ſo differently ſhould not be mutually offenſive to each other, and that thoſe who triumphed for the moment ſhould not become ſubjects of apprehenſion to thoſe already ſo dreadfully alarmed.

During this ſtate of jealous fear, ſtrong confirmations could not be wanting, for "trifles light as air" would have ſerved the purpoſe; and it is well known, that even the very looks of the ſuppoſed republicans were ſtated in the houſe of commons as proofs of their ſeditious views. It muſt however be acknowledged, that there were great folly and indiſcretion, to ſay no worſe, in the conduct of many of the *new Whigs* *; and that the addreſſes to the National Aſſembly from ſocieties in England, however they might be intended, were incapable of producing any good, and were pregnant with the moſt ſerious evils. Whether any thing reſembling a plot really exiſted, cannot perhaps be as yet aſcertained. Floating notions of change probably pervaded the imaginations, and occaſionally eſcaped the lips of enthuſiaſts; but it does not appear at all likely that any plan for this purpoſe was con-

* This deſcription of men has not yet got a name that both they and their opponents admit—Patriots and Jacobins are the party deſignations—I chooſe a middle term, and quote for this appellation the authority of Mr. Burke.

certed or even meditated in any quarter. And the notion ſo induſtriouſly circulated, that there was among us a large body of men, ſome of them of the firſt talents, leagued in a conſpiracy againſt their country with the Jacobin party of France, is one of thoſe wild and "fooliſh things," of which in a few months thoſe who credited it "will in their cooler moments be aſhamed," and which will ſoon be remembered only for miſchief it has done.

It is to this general ſuſpicion that the war itſelf is in a great meaſure to be attributed. One part of the cabinet, as report ſays, was warmly and decidedly for it from the firſt; and the eagerneſs of the *Alarmiſts* in the houſe of commons in favour of this bloody meaſure is well known. A ſtep ſo fatal to the general intereſts of the country would not, however, have been taken in the face of even a feeble oppoſition out of doors. Three public meetings—at Mancheſter, Wakefield, and Norwich, prevented the Ruſſian war. But where was oppoſition now to come from? Every man that objected to a meaſure of miniſters was by this time ſuppoſed to be an enemy to the conſtitution; and he who oppoſed a war with France, was openly cried down as a ſecret ally of the Jacobins, and as only anxious to ſave them from the force of our irreſiſtible arm. Profeſſions of attachment to our own happy conſtitution were regarded as of no value, unleſs they were accompanied with a blind and unlimited confidence in adminiſtration; and he only was conſidered as a true friend to his country, who was ready to put all our bleſſings at hazard, by ruſhing madly forward into this fooliſh cruſade.

The whole body that aſſociated with Mr. Reeves ſeemed to think the ſupport of the war neceſſary to the ſupport of the conſtitution; and in the houſe of commons Mr. Burke, with the peculiar phrenſy that diſtinguiſhes all his conduct, reiterated the war-hoop of *atheiſm*, and pronounced Mr. Fox's propoſal of attempting to avert hoſtilities by negociation, as a ſtep

a ſtep that would by neceſſary conſequence expoſe our virtuous monarch, with little proſpect of eſcape, to the fate of the unfortunate Louis *.

It was owing I preſume to the ſyſtem you have adopted, that though, as it has ſince appeared, you were at this time actually negociating, you preſerved a cautious ſilence, and ſuffered the nation to believe you thought with Mr. Burke. For the firſt time in his life Engliſhmen were in ſympathy with this extraordinary character, and madneſs became more contagious than the plague.

If it were at all proper to argue with men who can believe that the only means of ſecuring the reverence of the nation for the conſtitution, is to plunge us into all the horrors and miſeries of a foreign war, I would point out the conſequences that may poſſibly reſult from the rebound of general ſentiment, from the union of ſtarving ignorance with deſperate ambition, and from the progreſs of poverty, miſery, and diſcontent. But I do not think it neceſſary at preſent to inſiſt on ſuch topics; becauſe, blindly and fooliſhly as ſuch men have acted on their own principles, I believe the ſeaſon

* The manner in which this ſtrange man has introduced his ſovereign into debate, at different times, is truly curious. His conduct in this reſpect during the regency, when he repreſented the Almighty as *having hurled him from his throne*—and at the time now alluded to, when, in the exceſs of his loyalty, he expreſſed his fears *of his being beheaded*—are apparently much contraſted, but evidently flow from the ſame ſtructure of mind. A man that could talk openly in the houſe of commons of the "king's head being cut off," is not, however, I apprehend, likely to be appointed a lord of the bed-chamber, or even a gentleman-uſher. Mr. Burke, it is ſaid, is a poet; and this is true. But there ſeems about him a phrenſy that is more than poetical—an habitual diſpoſition to exaggeration, that treſpaſſes the bounds, not of truth only, but of nature—and an iraſcibility that has no reſemblance to any thing to be ſeen in rational life, and that impreſſes upon us the notion of a *mind diſeaſed!* In this view of the ſubject Mr. Burke is perhaps an object of pity. When his fits are not upon him, he is known to be gentle and humane.

of deluſion is paſſing, and that Engliſhmen will be able to diſtinguiſh, under every event, the ſubſtantial excellence of our conſtitution; and attribute their ſufferings, whatever they may be, to their own deluſion, and the madneſs of thoſe who have miſled the public mind.

But it may be ſaid that the war is likely to be ſhort and ſucceſsful, and is therefore now to be perſiſted in, however indiſcreetly it may have been begun.

The anſwer to this is not difficult—The war has had already all the ſucceſs that we could hope for: it brought on the invaſion of Holland, and that invaſion is repelled: it has obliged the French to abandon Flanders—to do that by force, which they were before inclined to do by negociation: it has covered the ſea with our ſhips of war, and made the merchantmen both of France and England diſappear—and finally, after ſeveral hard fought battles, it has enabled the king of Pruſſia to lay ſiege to Mentz, and the Prince of Coburg to ſit down before Valenciennes—But what is really of importance, it has brought from the French new offers of peace.

What then may be the cauſe why we ſo proudly and ſullenly (as it is ſaid) reject them?

It may be ſaid, that we wiſh to carry on the war till we obtain a barrier againſt the future irruptions of the French into Holland or Brabant; and that, this being effected, we mean with our allies to reſt on our arms, and leave the nation to ſettle its own government. If this be our policy, it were far better to reſt now.

The probability of obtaining and of preſerving peace depends, in a great meaſure, on the terms which are offered according with natural principles of equity. That every nation ſhould keep within its own confines, and chooſe its own government, without moleſting its neighbours, is a propoſition which is agreeable to our common apprehenſions of juſtice; and, applied fairly and equally to the powers at war,

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it may produce a ſpeedy and laſting peace. But to inſiſt, as a ground-work of ſuch a treaty, that the Auſtrians ſhall obtain and keep poſſeſſion of thoſe ſtrong fortreſſes on the northern frontier by which France is defended, is to propoſe that which is equally offenſive to the pride and alarming to the fears of Frenchmen, and which is likely to occaſion a vaſt and a fruitleſs effuſion of human blood. "Shall we conſent (they will cry) that France ſhall be diſmembered? Shall we abandon our countrymen of Liſle and Valenciennes to the deſpots of Germany? If we give up a part of our territory, what ſecurity ſhall we have that the dividers of Poland will reſt contented with a part, eſpecially when, by poſſeſſing our ſtrong holds, they may invade us at pleaſure, and march at once into the heart of our defenceleſs country?" Such are the queſtions that will be aſked, and it muſt be acknowledged that they are founded on natural feelings and reaſonable fears: before theſe are ſubdued, many a brave man will periſh in the field. But if indeed the ſecurity of the Low Countries be our only object, why not fortify Namur, Mons, Tournay, &c. which the Emperor Joſeph diſmantled, under an idea (which illuſtrates very ſtrongly the folly of attempting to look far into futurity) that the marriage of his ſiſter with the unfortunate Louis would render a barrier needleſs on the ſide of France? If thoſe fortifications which were thought ſufficient againſt Louis XIV. are not ſufficient againſt the proud republicans, why not erect others? and if bankrupt Auſtria cannot do this, let us (if we muſt mingle in their affairs) be taxed to ſupport them, but let it be for an expenditure that will terminate in peace.

The real intereſt of foreign nations is not, whether France ſhall have a conſtitution of this or that form; it is, that ſhe ſhall have a regular government of ſome form or other, which may ſecure the faith of treaties, and due ſubordination to law; and this is the intereſt of the people of France themſelves

themſelves more than any other. Why then, it may be ſaid, do they not follow their intereſt? Becauſe they do not perceive it; and they are prevented from perceiving it by the preſſure of external war.

Revolutions of government call forth great talents and virtues, but they alſo too frequently call forth great crimes. Where all the uſual ordinances of law and ſociety are broken down, men will riſe indeed in ſome degree according to their activity and powers, but in a degree too according as theſe are exerted without ſcruple or reſtraint. In the enthuſiaſtic ſtate of mind by which revolutions are accompanied, great crimes make little impreſſion on the *million*, provided they are committed in the ſpirit of party, and under the appearance of patriotiſm. Compaſſion, charity, candour, and even a ſenſe of juſtice, are too generally ſwept away in the whirlwind of paſſion and prejudice, and lie buried under the wreck of virtuous habits and principles, to revive in quieter times. In ſuch a ſtate of things the natural influence of integrity and property, as well as the artificial diſtinctions of rank and birth, give way to the governing power of enthuſiaſm; and men often riſe to direction and command from the loweſt ſtations, by the force of ſtrong talents and bold tempers, and by the buoyancy of heated imaginations.

Enthuſiaſm is in ſeaſons of danger felt by virtuous as well as by unprincipled minds—by the former indeed perhaps more than the latter: but in virtuous minds, while it expands all the generous feelings, it does not deſtroy the reſtraints of principle or honour, even towards antagoniſts or enemies, and much leſs towards thoſe embarked in the ſame cauſe.

Revolutions however, in their progreſs, ſtir up ſociety more and more, even to the very dregs, and bring forward more and more of ignorance and profligacy (terms which in political life are nearly convertible) into the general maſs of feeling

feeling and of action, in which the national will and the national force reſide. Men who wiſh to guide this will, and direct this force, in times of popular commotion, muſt partake of its character, and vary their conduct with the rapid changes which the general ſentiment undergoes. But in every great revolution this ſentiment has a tendency to become gradually worſe, and the character of thoſe at the helm muſt become worſe alſo. In the courſe of this melancholy progreſs, therefore, men of real principle and pure honour, who cannot bend to the opinions of the day, are probably thrown off, or perhaps deſtroyed, and are ſucceeded by other deſcriptions, each in ſucceſſion more unlike the firſt, till at laſt perhaps the unprincipled and deſperate obtain undiſputed ſway.

Hence, in our own country, the reſiſtance to Charles I. which was led by Hampden and Faulkland, terminated in Cromwell and Lambert: and hence the revolution of France, originating with Fayette, Neckar, and Mirabeau, has deſcended into the hands of Danton and Roberſpierre *.

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* The American revolution may be inſtanced as an exception to this general repreſentation, but improperly. We muſt firſt obſerve (as was noticed by Mr. Fox in his ſpeech on Mr. Gray's motion) that in America, though there was a change of the governing power, there was no revolution of habits or opinions—no ſudden change of principles. It muſt be obſerved alſo, that the Americans had much leſs of poverty and ignorance among them (though leſs knowledge no doubt) than what is to be found in England and France. And thirdly, it muſt be obſerved, that ſomething of the ſame kind did actually take place in America as in England and France, though certainly in a leſs degree. Round the American Revolution, as well as the American character, a falſe glare has been thrown by the ſplendour of their ſucceſs. The congreſs did not, like the national aſſembly, expoſe their debates and diſſentions to their own people, much leſs to all Europe; but it is well known that a party prevailed in it to a conſiderable degree, and Waſhington himſelf, if report ſpeaks truth, was at one time preſerved in his command by a ſingle vote only. In the courſe of the revolution many bloody deeds were acted, the memory of which need not now be revived. But the

following

The influence however of men who openly violate the firſt obligations, as well as the moſt palpable intereſts of ſociety, is expoſed to continual danger from the very ſcaffolding on which it is raiſed, and cannot ſurvive that heated and enthuſiaſtic ſtate of mind which extinguiſhes for a time, and for a time only, the feelings of compaſſion and the ſenſe of juſtice.

Enthuſiaſm is, from its very violence, of ſhort continuance: it produces the moſt cruel deſolations in ſociety: but, as Mr. Hume has obſerved, "its fury is like that of thun-"der and tempeſt, which exhauſt themſelves in a little time, "and leave the air more calm and ſerene than before." The accounts that we receive of the French ſhew clearly, that they are at preſent a nation of enthuſiaſts: of this their very crimes give the moſt decided evidence. Their contempt of danger and hardſhips; their utter diſregard of ſelf-intereſt, and of all the motives which influence men in tranquil life;

following quotation from the hiſtory of the American revolution by Dr. Ramſay, himſelf a member of the congreſs, will ſhew how the morals of the people were affected, and bear teſtimony to the author's candour and love of truth. "Time and induſtry have already, in a great degree, repaired the loſſes of "property which the citizens ſuſtained during the war, but both have "hitherto failed in effacing the taint which was then communicated to "their principles; nor can its total ablution be expected till a new gene-"ration ariſes, unpractiſed in the iniquities of their fathers." If indeed Dr. Ramſay had not acknowledged this, the conduct of the aſſemblies which were elected immediately after the revolution would ſufficiently prove it. By theſe aſſemblies ſtanding on a popular baſis (eſpecially by that of South Carolina) acts were paſſed diſſolving the obligations of juſtice in a way as arbitrary, and nearly as open, as thoſe of the moſt deſpotic monarch whatever. An experience of the evils reſulting from ſuch outrages has reformed both the principles and the practice of the American politicians; and men of honour and integrity, many of them beaten down by the revolution, have recovered their proper influence in quieter times. Over and above all the circumſtances I have mentioned, the natural phlegm of the American character, compared with the vehemence and impetuoſity of the French, was an advantage not to be calculated.

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their frantic ſchemes; their wild ſuſpicions; their implacability towards their enemies; their proneneſs to murder;—theſe are the true and exact features of enthuſiaſm, operating on minds previouſly degraded by a ſuperſtition the moſt vile, and by a ſlavery the moſt abject *.

The more fiercely this national diſeaſe rages, the more certainly will it terminate ſpeedily, provided it be left to itſelf. Society cannot poſſibly ſubſiſt under the preſent ſyſtem in France, and the exceſſes of the Jacobins muſt ſooner or later produce their deſtruction. The nation, waking from its delirium, will ſee the horror of its ſituation, and fly for a refuge from anarchy to the conſtitution it has rejected, or ſome better regulated form of government; or perhaps to the very deſpotiſm it has overthrown. But, if continued attacks are made from without, this iſſue will certainly be prolonged, and may perhaps be prevented, till the deſpotic governments now in arms, every day becoming more poor, and therefore more oppreſſive, ſhall be themſelves brought to the ground!

The great inſtrument of the ſucceſs of the Jacobins has been the ſuſpicion they have conſtantly excited, that every friend of peace and ſubordination was connected with the foreign enemies that are invading France †. A high-ſpirited nation will not receive the pureſt bleſſings on compulſion,

* In Dr. Moore's Journal, various proofs of the truth of this may be found.—A Sans Culotte preſenting to the National Aſſembly, on the 10th of Auguſt, the head of a murdered Swiſs, and at the ſame time emptying out of his hat the jewels and gold which he had found in the Thuilleries, is a ſtriking picture of the ſpecies of diſeaſe of mind under which the nation labours.

† The ſtrength of ſuch an inſtrument as this may be judged of by the ſucceſs with which it was employed by the *alarmiſts* here. The friends of peace in this country were in the ſame manner denounced as leagued with foreign invaders; and this was the real ſecret of Meſſrs. Reeves, Burke, and Co. for *levelling the levellers*, at the ſucceſs of which, conſidering the men, many people have been ſo much ſurpriſed. The nation was panic-ſtruck, and apprehenſion and credulity go hand in hand.

and would reject the Britiſh conſtitution itſelf, though it were abſolutely perfect, if preſented on the bayonet's point. But what boon do the conquerors of Poland hold out to them? What bleſſings do the people of Germany offer to their view? Abſolute ſubjugation to a foreign force is the favour and the mercy of the rulers; ignorance and ſubmiſſion to unlimited oppreſſion is the example of the armed ſlaves whom they command. It is no wonder that a nation of enthuſiaſts ſhould be inflamed to madneſs on the approach of ſuch invaders, and, ſpurning the dictates of reaſon, ſhould conſider thoſe who would reſtrain them as leagued with their enemies, and commit themſelves to ſuch only as are as frantic as themſelves. Hence every attempt to reſtore order to France has been fruſtrated by foreign invaſion; Clermont-Tonnerre and Rochfoucauld have been murdered; and Narbonne, Fayette, and Liancourt have fled. And hence alſo it is but too likely that the ſiege of Valenciennes and Condé will prove the ruin of the brave and perhaps honeſt inſurgents on the banks of the Loire. How certain the overthrow of the Jacobin ſyſtem in France would be, if the nation were left to itſelf, may be gathered, not only from the nature of that ſyſtem, but from the attempts to overturn it in the very face of a foreign invaſion; and how very unlikely the allies are to ſucceed in their endeavours to give a conſtitution to France by force (the only rational object for which war can be continued), may be collected, not only from the hiſtory of the paſt, and from what has been already mentioned, but from other conſiderations.

Under the preſſure of external invaſion, almoſt any government will hold a nation together; and every form of republican government, however unfit for quieter ſeaſons, is at ſuch times productive of great energy of mind, and therefore of great national force. The cauſe of this is to be traced to the peculiar conſequence which a republican government gives

gives to the individual, by which his country becomes of conſequence to him, and the whole ſtrength of his private and public affections in a moment of external invaſion bears on a ſingle object—the national defence. The truth of this might be amply illuſtrated from the hiſtory of the republics of Greece and Rome; where may be ſeen alſo, what appears ſo very extraordinary in modern times, the moſt unbounded licentiouſneſs and confuſion in the centre of the government, joined with the moſt formidable power on the frontiers*.

In times of peace the exiſtence of primary aſſemblies, ſuch as are univerſal in France, ſeems incompatible with the ſafety of eſtabliſhed government; but in a ſituation like the preſent, theſe will be the nurſeries of courage, of eloquence, of daring minds;—by giving every individual an active and perſonal intereſt in the ſtate, they will ſtrengthen its defence in an extraordinary manner. The diviſion of France into diſtricts and departments, eſtabliſhes within it ſo many rival republics, and in this way will probably produce that high-ſpirited emulation between neighbouring communities, ſo dangerous to internal quiet, but to which Greece, when invaded, owed its ſafety in the claſſic ages, and perhaps Switzerland its independence in modern times.

In the progreſs of revolutions, it is material to obſerve, that talents do not ſeem to ſuffer an equal degradation with principles. On the contrary, ſituations of continued difficulty and danger have a tendency to call them forth (in as far as

* In this reſpect, as well as in ſeveral others, France recalls to our minds the ſtates of antiquity. There are indeed circumſtances of reſemblance in their ſituation that might afford room for much curious obſervation, and our heſitation in applying the experience we derive from Greece or Rome to modern France is perhaps chiefly founded on a doubt, which at times has appeared reaſonable enough—whether theſe countries have contained beings of the ſame ſpecies—whether theſe French be indeed men, or ſome other deſcription of animals.

they are diſtinct from virtue) more and more, and to ſtrengthen and expand them when found. In long eſtabliſhed monarchies, ſuch as are ſpread over the continent of Europe, rank has the chief, or indeed the ſole influence in beſtowing command, and nature in beſtowing talents pays no attention to rank. But in revolutions, artificial diſtinctions being overturned, the order of nature is in ſome degree reſtored, and talents riſe to their proper level. Hence it is that revolutions, once ſet on foot, have the weight of talents generally in their favour. It may be objected, indeed, that when the ſword is once drawn, the iſſue depends on military diſcipline and ſkill, and that theſe will always be found on the ſide of experience. Daily obſervation however proves, that the mere mechaniſm of a ſoldier is eaſily and ſpeedily learnt; and the uniform voice of hiſtory tells us, that the qualities of a great general are in an eſpecial manner the work of nature; what ſuperior genius ſeems to acquire the ſooneſt, and what all other men find it impoſſible to acquire at all. Hence, though in the beginning of wars diſcipline and eſtabliſhed rank have uſually the advantage, in the courſe of them nature and genius always preponderate *.

* The whole of theſe obſervations might be illuſtrated from our own civil wars. Deteſtable as Cromwell and his aſſociates were in many reſpects, they muſt be allowed to have poſſeſſed very ſuperior talents both in the cabinet and the field. In the beginning of the war, military experience was entirely with the king; but, what is curious, there did not ariſe one good commander on his ſide, the gallant Montroſe excepted, and he, it may be obſerved, was educated among the covenanters. On the other ſide aroſe Eſſex, Fairfax, Cromwell, Ireton, Lambert, and Monk. Moſt of theſe had no previous acquaintance with military affairs. Cromwell, the firſt captain of the age, was forty-three years old before he became a ſoldier. Theſe curious circumſtances have not eſcaped Mr. Hume, nor the explanation of them. Reflecting on this ſubject, I have ſometimes amuſed myſelf with ſuppoſing what ſort of military commanders our political leaders would make, and I apprehend they would arrange themſelves pretty much according to their preſent order.—Firſt-rate talents are of univerſal application.

The application of theſe obſervations to the affairs of France is ſo obvious, that it would be ſuperfluous, as well as tedious, to point it out.

The impoſſibility of conquering opinions by the ſword, and the dreadful ſlaughter which the attempt when perſiſted in muſt neceſſarily occaſion, may be learnt from the revolution in the Low Countries, and the bloody tranſactions which were there carried on under the direction of Alva. If the great maſs of the people have imbibed opinions, extermination only can root them out. Hence the *fundamentality* of the French revolution, ſo much exclaimed againſt by the weak and fearful, and ſo much dreaded even by the enlightened, though it will probably be the ſource of long internal diſſentions, renders it invulnerable by foreign attack. Mr. Hume has remarked the univerſal and extreme reluctance with which men abandon power once poſſeſſed; and you, Mr. Pitt, can probably ſpeak to this truth from your own feelings.—Well then, Sir, the Sans Culottes have recovered what they call their rights, and may be ſaid to be men in power—power newly taſted, after long and hard oppreſſion. Whether this power be good for them or not is another thing—they think it good, and that is enough. When once they have obtained quiet poſſeſſion of it, they will probably abuſe it, as other men in power have done before them. But while it is attempted to be wreſted from them by armed force, it will riſe every moment in their eſtimation, and death only will be able to rob them of their prize. The revolution of Poland, on the other hand, was not a *fundamental* revolution; and it was praiſed by Mr. Burke (a ſuſpicious circumſtance) on this account. The truth is, it was a change of the form of government, and a partial enlargement of its baſis, from which however nine tenths of the people of Poland were entirely ſhut out. When the king and the nobles therefore abandoned it, the peaſantry

abandoned

abandoned it alſo, and found no motive for riſking their lives in defence of bleſſings they had not been permitted to taſte. This is the real cauſe of the rapid ſucceſs of the confederate arms, and not the open plains and diſmantled fortreſſes of the country, as ſome have ſuppoſed. The true defence of a nation in ſuch circumſtances—the only defence that is impregnable, lies in the poor man's heart;—that abandoned, the reſt is eaſy.

In viewing this ſubject, ſo many conſiderations ruſh on the mind to ſhew the folly of the preſent invaſion of France, that I am compelled to dwell on general topics only; otherwiſe I might expatiate on the utter incapacity of the Auſtrian army to keep the field at all without ſupplies from this country, and the impoſſibility of our finding ſuch ſupplies. Abject as the temper of the nation appears, it will not, I apprehend, ſubmit to utter ruin; and I pronounce coolly, what I have conſidered deeply, that nothing but utter ruin can be the conſequence of our perſiſting in this copartnerſhip with the folly and bankruptcy of the continental powers. It is not enough that we pay with Engliſh guineas, extracted from the labour of our oppreſſed peaſantry, the people of Heſſe and Hanover, to fight German battles; we muſt ſupport the armies of Auſtria alſo, and, from the wreck of our ruined manufactures, ſupply them with food, clothing, and arms. But what conſummates our misfortunes is, that if by our aſſiſtance the confederates ſhould ſucceed in their views, England will be blotted out of the ſyſtem of Europe: Holland cannot preſerve her independence a ſingle day; a connected chain of deſpotiſm will extend over the faireſt portion of the Earth; and the lamp of Liberty, that has blazed ſo brightly in our "Sea-girt Iſle," muſt itſelf be extinguiſhed in the univerſal night *.

The

* I purpoſely avoid enlarging on this view of the ſubject, becauſe I think nothing

The miſchief that is meditated is of a magnitude that ſeems more than mortal, but happily the execution of it requires more than mortal force. The ignorant and innocent ſlaves that are the inſtruments on this occaſion are men —they muſt be clothed and fed—they have men to contend with, and are liable to the death they are ſent to inflict—they may periſh by the ſword, by fatigue, by famine, and by diſeaſe. The new Alarics that employ them are men alſo, weak, ignorant, and mortal like the reſt. Death will ſoon level them with the inſtruments of their guilty ambition. In a few years, or perhaps a few months, Catherine will ſleep, lifeleſs, with Joſeph, with Leopold, with *Peter the Third*. New characters leſs tinctured with prejudice will receive a portion of the ſpirit of the age, the ſyſtems of deſpotiſm be broken, and mortality come in aid of reaſon and truth.

In the mean time it is poſſible that Condé and Valenciennes may be taken, and that the hoſtile armies may march into France as before. If purſued into their own country, Frenchmen will, in all probability, continue united; and they will carry on the war, when compared to their aſſailants, at little expenſe. The men are on the ſpot; their proviſions are behind them; muſkets are in their hands; enthuſiaſm in their hearts. The more the nation is compreſſed within its centre, the more will the elaſticity of its force and courage increaſe. The invaders will probably be again compelled to retreat, and their retreat will neither be eaſy nor certain: the victorious republicans will purſue them, and again, perhaps, diſdaining the reſtraints of prudence, puſh their conqueſts to the banks of the Rhine. A ſingle action loſt, a ſingle action recovered, Flanders; and Flanders and Holland will now feel the ſame blow

nothing ſo unlikely as the conqueſt of France. It has been diſcuſſed in the Morning Chronicle, by a writer under the ſignature of "A Calm Obſerver," with a perſpicuity and force of reaſoning that nothing can ſurpaſs. The whole ſeries of letters far exceed any ſimilar production of the Engliſh preſs.

What

What ſhall ſave Holland if Flanders fall? The Coldſtream you ſee are mortal men. Even the three princes of the blood-royal of England will not appal the fierce republicans—*What care theſe roarers for the name of King* * ? If the danger I ſtate ſeems at a diſtance, let it not on that account be diſregarded. Every ſtep the allied armies advance into France, the danger ſeems to me to approach; and were they within ten leagues of Paris, I ſhould tremble the more for the fate of Amſterdam.

The opportunity of reſtoring general peace preſented itſelf at the time of the congreſs of Antwerp. Dumourier had retreated; Flanders was recovered. We had nothing to do but to declare, what muſt I think be declared in the end, that *if France will confine herſelf within her own territory, ſhe may there ſhape out her own conſtitution at her will.* Had this been done at the time mentioned, Dumourier, not rendered odious by foreign alliance, would in all probability have been able to reſtore the conſtitutional monarchy; and in every event, France, occupied by inteſtine diviſions, would, as it ſeems probable, have left Europe in quiet for many years to come. This policy was ſo clear that a mere child might have diſcerned it; it did not even require a negociation with the French cabinet, and while it ſecured our beſt intereſts, it left our honour without a ſtain.

How then ſhall we account for the reſolves of the congreſs of Antwerp? We muſt unveil the truth. The members of this congreſs were German princes, or their agents; even the repreſentative of England there *was a German prince.* Such men, from their education, are in general ignorant, and labour under prejudices, from their ſituation, of a deſtructive kind.

Military deſpots in their own dominions, they feel it their perſonal intereſt, perhaps they think it the intereſt of mankind (ſuch may be the force of prejudice) that deſpotiſm

* Shakeſpeare's Tempeſt.

ſhould

ſhould be univerſal. To ſuch men the anarchy of France, under Jacobin rulers, is not half ſo alarming as the conſtitution to which this may give birth. They are aware that the crimes acting there at preſent are ſufficient to render the French name deteſtable among their ſubjects; but if theſe crimes ſhould open theeyes of the French themſelves—if, out of the mingled wrecks of deſpotiſm and anarchy, a limited monarchy ſhould ariſe in France, as it did in England, or any other form of a free conſtitution that ſecures ſubordination to law—then it is that the French example will become far more deſtructive to arbitrary governments than their arms, and the crowned heads of Germany, great and ſmall, will have real cauſe to tremble. It is true, if they were enlightened, they need not tremble at all; they would ſee that arbitrary power is as deſtructive to him that poſſeſſes, as to him that endures it. But it cannot be expected that they ſhould diſcern this—the errors of education blind all but very ſuperior minds; and though Germany produces more princes than all Europe beſides, it is not once in a century that ſhe produces a prince that is a truly great man*.

Mr. Fox contends that government is *from* the people; Mr. Wyndham that it is only *for* the people. Theſe philological diſtinctions are not attended to by the rulers of Germany, among whom even the word *people* is not to be found. Their *ſubjects*, they know, are accuſtomed to obedience; the bleſſ-

* Frederick the Second was an extraordinary man, and it has amuſed many perſons to ſuppoſe how he might have acted on the preſent occaſion. This however ſeems pretty certain, that he would not have lain eight months in the neighbourhood of Mentz before he found an opportunity of laying ſiege to it. The preſent conduct of the Pruſſians conveys an eulogium on the talents of that great monarch, beyond the power of Hertzberg's oratory. As however they conſidered themſelves ſacrificed before, their preſent backwardneſs may ariſe as much from ſpleen as from any other cauſe.

ings that flow from liberty and property they have never experienced, and they are therefore fit inſtruments in the hands of arbitrary power. Germany, it is well known, is inhabited chiefly by princes, nobles, muſicians, and peaſantry; merchants, manufacturers, and country gentlemen, the leading deſcriptions of Engliſhmen, are there almoſt wholly unknown. The three firſt of theſe claſſes are, during war, in their natural element; and the laſt, who ſuſtain all the evils and all the burthens, are as yet too abject and too ignorant to make their ſufferings dangerous to thoſe by whom they are oppreſſed. A perſeverance in the war will indeed deſtroy what little trade and manufactures there are in Germany, and render their governments (that of Hanover excepted, whoſe military expenſes are defrayed by England) univerſally bankrupt. The creditors of the ſtates will be ruined, but the expenſes of the courts and armies will not perhaps on that account be leſs. The ordinary revenue of a German prince depends chiefly on the products of the ſoil, and dreadful muſt be the oppreſſion indeed, before theſe fail. The peaſantry will be taxed more and more to ſupport increaſing burthens, and the extortion of ſuch taxes will rivet the poverty and ignorance through which alone theſe burthens are endured. It is thus that the tyranny of the rulers and the degradation of the people muſt keep equal pace; it is thus that deſpotiſm forms a natural alliance with ignorance, blaſts every charm of rational nature, and blunts every feeling of the human heart. There is indeed a point at which the oppreſſion of the moſt abject becomes no longer ſafe—a point to which, if I miſtake not, the deſpotic governments of Europe are faſt approaching. They have undertaken to ſubdue the enemies of kingly government in France, and are ſtaking their whole credit on the iſſue of an undertaking from which, according to every human appearance, they will return baffled and diſgraced. The moſt deſpotic

governments depend for their exiſtence on opinion, as well as the moſt free. If the concert of princes ſhould be baffled, the prejudices of their ſubjects will be ſhaken, and the foundation of their thrones will from that moment be for ever inſecure.

Behold then, once more, a criſis which has ſo often occurred in hiſtory; which has preſented ſo frequent and ſo awful a warning to rulers, and has preſented it ſo often in vain! A government bankrupt by its own waſte and folly; ſenſible of its inſecurity, and therefore jealous, irritable, and oppreſſive. A people already labouring under almoſt intolerable burthens, and doomed to ſuffer others more heavy ſtill—caſting off, with its prejudices, the habitual ſubmiſſion and reſpect to its rulers, and imbibing thoſe immutable truths which are ſo dangerous to oppreſſors, and ſometimes indeed ſo fatal to thoſe who are oppreſſed. Every day the breach widens—the ſword at length is drawn, and the ſcabbard caſt away.—In the dreadful conflict which follows there is only one alternative; the government muſt be overturned, or the people reduced to the condition of beaſts. We cannot have forgotten the cauſes which have produced the revolutions of Switzerland, Holland, and England—which have ſo recently produced the revolution of France;—the ſame cauſes are again conſpiring to ſhake all Europe to its centre, and to form a new æra in human affairs.

What a dreadful infatuation is it which involves the fate of Engliſhmen in this impending ruin—which embarks our commerce, our manufactures, our revenue, perhaps our conſtitution itſelf, the ſource of all our bleſſings, in this deſperate cruſade of deſpotiſm and ſuperſtition againſt anarchy and enthuſiaſm! in the courſe of which, however it terminate, we can reap nothing but misfortune; and in the iſſue of which we may learn, that no human inſtitution can withſtand the folly of thoſe who adminiſter its powers.

Men of Switzerland, how I reſpect you! While the hurricane of human paſſions ſweeps over France, Italy, and Germany, elevated on your lofty mountains, you are above the region of the ſtorm. Secure in your native ſenſe, your ſincere patriotiſm, your ſimple government, your invincible valour, your eternal hills—you can look down on the follies and the crimes which deſolate Europe, with calmneſs and with pity, and anticipate the happy æra when perhaps you may mediate univerſal peace. Sea-girt Britain might have enjoyed this ſituation, had ſhe known how to eſtimate her bleſſings, and kept aloof from the madneſs of the day.

At this moment the ſeſſion of parliament cloſes;—a dead ſtillneſs prevails over England, the natural conſequence of aſtoniſhment at the ſpreading deſtruction, and of ſtrong paſſions violently ſuppreſſed. The Oppoſition, deſerted by all thoſe *feeble amateurs* whoſe minds have not ſufficient comprehenſion to diſcern the true intereſt of their country, or whoſe nerves are too weak to bear up againſt vulgar prejudice, has endeavoured, but in vain, to diſcover the extent of our continental engagements, or the real objects of the war *. Two hundred and eighty members, ranging behind you, ſupport every meaſure you propoſe; and among the whole number, not a man has been found to inquire of you openly, in the name and in behalf of the people of England, how long their patience is to endure, and how far the progreſs of ruin is to extend?

You have aſſumed on this awful occaſion the whole reſponſibility of public meaſures, and your character and reputation, I fear, you miſtakingly conceive, are wholly committed on the ſucceſsful iſſue of the war. Your real friends muſt

* Security and compenſation are words that may be explained at pleaſure.

ſincerely

ſincerely lament this on your own account; the friends of their country will lament it, on account of the general calamities it is likely to produce. The nation, Mr. Pitt, has loved you "well—not wiſely;" and it is partly in conſequence of this that at the preſent moment her real intereſts are oppoſed to the perſonal honour of him ſhe has truſted and idolized. In this day of diſtreſs ſhe is told to repoſe in the conſtitutional reſponſibility of miniſters. "Be ſtill, ye inhabi- "tants of the iſle, thou whom the merchants of Zidon that "paſs over the ſea have repleniſhed."—ISAIAH. Alas! what will ſilence do? Will the reſponſibility of miniſters reſtore her ruined trade, feed her ſtarving manufacturers? will it replace the huſband and father to the widow or the orphan, or reſtore to the aged parent his gallant ſon? will it recall to life the brave men now mouldering in unhallowed earth in Flanders, joint-tenants of a common grave with thoſe againſt whom they fought* ?

* * * * * *

If I were bold enough to appreciate your political life, Mr. Pitt, I ſhould be inclined to allow the outſet of it extraordinary merit. The ſentiment of approbation that attended you was indeed almoſt univerſal—you were the hope of the good, the pride of the wiſe, the idol of your country. If your official career had terminated with the diſcuſſions on the Regency, though one of the moſt fatal of your miſtakes had been committed before this, it may be queſtioned whether modern Europe could have produced a politician or an orator more ſtrenuous, more exalted, more authoritative†; one whoſe

* This affecting circumſtance is, I am told, literally true.

† See Mr. Gratton's character of Lord Chatham, printed as Dr. Robertſon's.

ambition

ambition was apparently more free from ſelfiſhneſs; who afforded to his opponents leſs room for cenſure, or gave to his friends more frequent occaſions of generous triumph and honeſt applauſe.—The errors that you have fallen into, are natural for men long poſſeſſed of power uncontrolled; and in imputing them to you, I accuſe you only of the weakneſſes of human nature. It is not neceſſary to a free people to have rulers exempt from ſuch weakneſſes; but it is neceſſary for them to watch and to guard againſt theſe infirmities.

It is natural, I believe, for ſucceſsful ambition to ſeek new objects on which it may exert itſelf. Hence, after you had ſubdued oppoſition in England, you iſſued forth like another Hercules in queſt of new adventures, and traverſed the continent of Europe to ſeek monſters whom you might ſubdue. You could not however but be ſenſible, that the reputation of a miniſter of trade and finance, which you had juſtly obtained, was incompatible with that of a great war miniſter in the preſent ſtate of the nation. You took therefore the middle line; you made preparations for fighting on every occaſion, but you took care not to ſtrike. England might perhaps bear the expenſe of arming, but could not actually go to war; and this ſecret, which your three ſucceſſive armaments diſcovered to all Europe, led Mirabeau on his death-bed to give you the name of *miniſtre preparatif*.

In men long in poſſeſſion of power, a ſecret ſympathy (unknown perhaps to themſelves) is gradually ſtrengthening in favour of others in the ſame ſituation, and a ſecret prejudice, amounting perhaps at laſt to enmity, againſt oppoſition to power in every form. Hence the danger you ſaw to England in the triumph of the patriots of Holland over the Prince of Orange, and the ſafety we acquired from the ſubjugation of the Dutch by the Pruſſian arms.—Hence alſo the perfect compoſure with which you expected the conqueſt

queſt of France by the deſpots of Germany, and the ſudden alarm with which you were ſeized, on the repulſion of that invaſion, and the overrunning of Flanders by the republican arms. By the freedom of Brabant the conſtitution of England might be endangered; but it became the more ſecure in your eye, it ſhould ſeem, by the extenſion of deſpotiſm over every corner of Europe, and the ſucceſs of foreign bayonets in rooting out *liberty* as well as licentiouſneſs in France.

It is alſo to the unhappy prejudices of your ſituation that I attribute your want of moderation of temper on occaſions of the utmoſt moment; your allying your great talents with the weak judgments and violent paſſions of thoſe around you; and your blindneſs (if ſuch it be) to the real dangers of this commercial nation, and to the path of ſafety and of true honour, which it was no leſs your duty than your intereſt to purſue.

In contemplating events of ſuch magnitude as thoſe connected with the French revolution, the utmoſt calmneſs, as well as comprehenſion of mind, is required—and more particularly required in him who directs the affairs of a great nation. Unhappily theſe qualities are ſeldom found in any ſtation; and this revolution, ſeen in part only, has become the object of wild encomium, or of bitter reprobation, as the prejudices of men have been affected, or their ſympathies engaged. The moſt prudent part perhaps for one whoſe political ſituation is influenced by the opinions he is ſuppoſed to hold, is to be ſilent on the ſubject. It is uncertain how this extraordinary event may terminate, and its ultimate effects on the human race cannot yet be aſcertained. At preſent, however, it is well known, that not in England only, but in every part of Europe, the dreadful exceſſes in Paris, and elſewhere, have turned the tide of popular ſentiment and opinion ſtrongly againſt the French. Even under the moſt deſpotic governments, the people at preſent hug their chains, and

tyranny

tyranny itſelf is ſecure. Can it then be ſuppoſed, that in England there is any ſerious danger from the contagion of French principles; in England, where the conſtitution is ſo ſubſtantially good, and the people ſo loyal and united? The theological and ſectarian prejudices of different and oppoſite kinds through which the affairs of France have been viewed, have indeed contributed moſt fatally to bewilder the underſtanding, and to inflame the prejudices of Engliſhmen; and to theſe is to be imputed, in a great degree, that moſt ſingular deluſion—that the ſafety of our conſtitution has depended on our riſking all our bleſſings in this moſt fruitleſs, expenſive, and bloody war. That deluſion (for ſuch I conſider it) is now I hope nearly over; and peace, which is the general intereſt, will ſoon, I doubt not, be the univerſal wiſh. Every conſideration calls loudly for it; and it may be much more eaſily obtained now, when our enemies are humbled, and the people of England are ſtill patient and ſilent, than at a future period, when the invading armies may be checked or repulſed, and the nation is become openly impatient under the expenſe and ruin of the war. A man of your ſagacity will eaſily diſcern, that in times like the preſent, the gale of popular opinion is conſtantly ſhifting the point whence it blows, and will ſee that it cannot be truſted to carry you forward in your preſent courſe, in the face of great and increaſing obſtacles.

The preſent ſtate of affairs in this country, and on the continent of Europe, forms a ſubject too intereſting to be left without reluctance—but far too extenſive to be thoroughly inveſtigated within the limits of a letter like this. The events of the day that is paſſing are likely to affect every portion of Europe, and, in their conſequences, the condition of the human race throughout the habitable earth. Many of the "bearings and ties" of this important ſubject I have been obliged to neglect, and others I have only glanced at; for I write on the ſpur of the occaſion, and under difficulties and interruptions

interruptions of various kinds. Should what I have written have the fortune to reach you, you will ſee that it is addreſſed to you more " in ſorrow than in anger," and on that account alone that it is not wholly unworthy of your regard. But I would farther perſuade myſelf, that it may ſuggeſt topics for ſerious reflection, by impreſſing on your mind the progreſs and unexampled extenſion of the war-ſyſtem throughout Europe; the correſponding progreſs of the funding-ſyſtem; the criſis to which this laſt has in ſome countries reached, and is every where approaching; and the probable as well as certain effects of this on our own commercial nation, and on mankind at large.

Hitherto you have taken it for granted, that though there is a certain point of depreſſion to which the commerce of this country may ſink in conſequence of the war, yet that from this, as in former wars, it will naturally return. I have ſuggeſted to you, that this ſuppoſition is dangerous, as well as fallacious, from the increaſed progreſs of our debts and taxes, from the locking up of the capital of our manufacturers in foreign debts, and from the growing poverty as well as the general bankruptcy that ſpreads over Europe, in conſequence of the continued preſſure of former burthens, and the unexampled extent and expenſe of the preſent war. I have not ſtated to you, under this head, the effects of a rapidly ſinking revenue, or of the emigration of our people to America; becauſe theſe conſiderations are ſo extremely ſerious that they cannot be mentioned without grief and alarm, and may form, of themſelves, a very ample ſubject for ſeparate diſcuſſion.

Mr. Dundas told us, in the houſe of commons, that our commercial diſtreſſes aroſe from our extraordinary proſperity, and boaſted that all the world united with us in the war againſt France. I have ſhewn that his aſſertion is a poor ſophiſm, and his boaſt a ſubject of ſorrow and apprehenſion.

Mr. Wyndham expreſſed his acquieſcence in the loſs of

our commerce, if we might retain our conſtitution; and on the ſame ground of preſerving our conſtitution, this perilous war has been often defended by yourſelf, your followers, and a great part of the nation. I have made out to you, what I know not how, as chancellor of the exchequer, you can well be ignorant of, that our commerce and our conſtitution have a moſt intimate dependence on each other; and that when the union is formed by twenty-four millions of taxes, tythes, and poor-rates, and two hundred and fifty millions of debt, they may be conſidered as embarked in the ſame adventure, and as likely to periſh in the ſame ſtorm.

How the war commenced I have endeavoured to explain, and you will conſider in your calmer moments, whether you really exerted yourſelf to preſerve peace by negociation, inſtead of procuring it by arms; and to what profit you have turned the honeſt affection of your countrymen for their conſtitution and king, and the generous indignation with which they ſurveyed the madneſs and brutality of their neighbours.

On various occaſions during this bloody conteſt I have ſhewn that the peace of Europe was in our power; that it was in our power recently on the retreat of Dumourier, and after we ourſelves had taſted the calamities of war. Why it was rejected you muſt yourſelf explain;—I have deſcribed the congreſs at Antwerp, and am no farther maſter of the ſubject.

The views that you conceal cannot be aſcertained, but what you have actually performed is not liable to miſapprehenſion. I have ſuggeſted to you, that you have united Engliſhmen in the intereſts and in the councils of thoſe who formed the treaty of Pillnitz; who retain Fayette in chains; who were the real cauſe of the triumphs of the Jacobin party in France over limited monarchy; who are in fact the pretext that the preſent anarchiſts

have

have employed, and will employ, to juſtify their deſperate proceedings; and who, by their recent conduct in Poland, have given ſuch proofs of their ambition, as well as of their power, as muſt fill the heart of every friend of his ſpecies with horror and alarm. That the deſtroyers of the conſtitution of Poland can be friendly to our own, the model on which it was formed, no one will believe. They are the deadly foes of liberty throughout the world; and I might have ſhewn you, that in the deſtruction of our revenue and commerce, the bulwarks will be removed which ſecure us from their overwhelming force. I might alſo have pointed out the danger of ſending our army to fight under their banners, and our princes to aſſociate in their councils;—but there are ſentiments of ſerious alarm which a lover of his country muſt deeply feel, that in this ſeaſon of deluſion it may be dangerous to utter.

Of the two motives for continuing the war, ſecurity and compenſation, I have conſidered that which alone I can underſtand, the former; and have ſhewn that the attempt to take and to ſeparate from France its frontier towns on the north, is full of difficulty and hazard, and that while it may render the war doubly bloody and deſperate, it can afford no ſecurity beyond what might be obtained from fortifying Auſtrian Flanders, already in our power. The true ſecurity to this country ariſing from the ſettlement of the French government, I have endeavoured to ſhew, is not promoted, but abſolutely prevented by the preſent invaſion, which, ſhould it be repelled, may leave unfortified Brabant, as well as Holland, an eaſy conqueſt to the republican arms.

In the fearful tragedy which is now acting on the theatre of Europe, you have unhappily made England one of the perſons of the drama, and ſhe cannot but act a part of unparalleled importance. You have aſſumed the direction of this

part to yourſelf, and before parliament again meets, the hopes and the fears of the enlightened, and the real intereſts of at leaſt the preſent race of mankind, may be at iſſue on your ſingle counſels. More than one falſe ſtep you have already made—the precipice is directly in your path, that leads to inevitable deſtruction. I know the temptations and the difficulties of your ſituation—we will forget the paſt, but if you advance, how ſhall you be forgiven?

In conſidering the aſpect of the preſent times, I am ſometimes affected with deep melancholy; yet I am not one of thoſe who deſpair of the fortunes of the human race. Through the thick clouds and darkneſs that ſurround us, I diſcern the workings of an over-ruling mind. Superſtition I know is the natural offspring of ignorance, and governs in the dark ages with a giant's ſtrength.—Unaſſiſted reaſon is a feeble enemy: oppoſed to ſuperſtition, reaſon, in days of ignorance, is a dwarf. In the order of providence, enthuſiaſm ariſes to reſiſt ſuperſtition—to combat a monſter with a monſter's force. What did Eraſmus in the days of Luther? What would Lowth have done in the days of Wycliffe, or Blair in thoſe of Knox? In the councils of Heaven, mean and wicked inſtruments are often employed for the higheſt purpoſes. The authors of the reformation were many of them ignorant, fierce, and even bloody: but the work itſelf was of the moſt important and moſt univerſal benefit to the human race. The *deſpotiſm* of prieſts then received its death-wound, and the *deſpotiſm* of princes has now perhaps ſuſtained a ſimilar blow.—Pure religion has ſurvived and improved after the firſt; the true ſcience of government may improve after the laſt, and be built every where on the ſolid foundations of utility and law. Before ſuch happy conſequences enſue, d eadful commotions may indeed be expected over Europe, commotions which England, and perhaps England only, may, if

the

ſhe is wiſe, eſcape. The preſent generation will probably be ſwept away before the intellectual earthquake ſubſides; but thoſe who ſucceed them, will, I truſt, find the air more pure and balmy, and the ſkies more bright and ſerene.

June 6, 1793.

J. W.

POSTSCRIPT.

IN printing a ſecond edition of this letter, it may not be uſeleſs to enquire, how far the events which have happened ſince its firſt publication correſpond to the repreſentations, or illuſtrate the reaſonings, it contains.

Your warmeſt and moſt injudicious partizans, Mr. Pitt, will not deny that the bankrupt ſtate of the continental powers, our allies, becomes every day more evident.—Engliſhmen have had a melancholy proof of the nature of the connections they have formed, not merely in the ſubſidies to Hanover, or to that flower of chivalry the Prince of Heſſe (who ſells the lives of his ſubjects at the rate of thirty banco crowns for each), but in the ſuccours demanded by the Auſtrians to enable them to keep the field; in the ruin of the commerce as well as the finance of Ruſſia (when the ruble, by the regular operations of its government, is reduced, in foreign exchange, to leſs than half its value); and in that moſt unprecedented of all treaties with the King of Sardinia, by which we are to pay him two hundred thouſand pounds annually, to keep up his own army, for the defence of his own country!

Though the merchants of this kingdom felt the ſad effects of the war firſt, it was predicted that on the manufacturers it would fall with the moſt unrelenting ruin. The truth of this is now undeniable:—even the woollen and iron branches of manufacture, which in former wars in a great meaſure eſcaped, are now almoſt in a ſtate of ſtagnation—He who handled the ſhuttle for three ſhillings a day, muſt now take ſixpence, and handle the ſpear;—and many of the enlightened and virtuous aſſertors of the conſtitution at Birmingham, ſo ſucceſsful in their ſkirmiſhes with hereſy

and

and the beaſts of the fleſh, are now doomed to a harder ſervice on the frontiers of France, where the " Bubble Reputation" muſt be " fought," not in the libraries or laboratories, or peaceful habitations of unprotected ſcience, but in the hoſtile fortreſs, " and in the cannon's mouth."

The reaſoning reſpecting paper-money is alſo confirmed—So far from this being the cauſe of our commercial diſtreſſes, it is now found, under proper regulations, to be the beſt alleviation for them that the times admit; and a Bank is propoſed at Glaſgow, and one has been eſtabliſhed at Liverpool, for this expreſs purpoſe.

What was obſerved on the ſubject of the ſuppoſed plots and conſpiracies, which have ſo fatally bewildered the underſtandings of men, ſeems alſo to be ſtrengthened by the progreſs of events.—The trial of Mr. Froſt, from which ſo much was expected, is now before the public, and the tenderneſs of the recorder of Leiceſter has ſunk deep into the public mind.—The zeal and activity of government have inſtituted various proſecutions, and leave no reaſon to ſuppoſe, that, through miſtaken lenity, treaſon or ſedition have been ſpared. As yet, however, the ſhadow of a conſpiracy has not been diſcovered———If there be men, Mr. Pitt, lurking in the boſom of their country, who have plotted with France for the deſtruction of our conſtitution, let their guilty blood ſtream on the ſcaffold; the miniſter, who would ſpare them, is himſelf a traitor—but let not the friends of their king and country, who oppoſe your preſent meaſures, be involved in ſo foul a charge, " to fright the iſle from its propriety," and to involve Us ſtill deeper in this ruinous war.

With regard to thoſe men who have perſuaded themſelves, that the ſafety of England depends on her perſiſting in the invaſion of France, till monarchy ſhall be forced on that kingdom by the allied arms; the occurrences of the laſt two months on the continent may abate their confidence, and diſpoſe

diſpoſe them to regard, with more attention and alarm, our ſituation at home—The fearful diminution of our exiſting revenue, and the increaſed expenſes of the war, will require, it is evident, new methods and objects of taxation:—theſe our wounded commerce and our diminiſhed conſumption cannot poſſibly ſupport; and the neceſſity of increaſing the land tax is already incurred. But if the war continues, eight ſhillings in the pound will do little towards the ſupport of the public expenditure, which, even on the peace eſtabliſhment (if poor-rates be included), already exceeds the groſs amount of all the landlords' rents in England:—a tax on the funds, of which the Dutch have long ago ſet us the example, may therefore be expected, and may at laſt rouſe the monied men from that blind and ſelfiſh acquieſcence in the meaſures of every adminiſtration, which has been the chief ſupport of our war-politics.—A friend, Sir, to the family on the throne, to our limited monarchy, and our conſtitution of three eſtates—a friend, above all, to the intereſts of my country, and the happineſs of the human race, I deprecate the continuance of this dreadful war—My reaſons are now before you and the public—However ineffectual my humble exertions may be to ward off the impending calamities, I ſhall ſtill have the ſatisfaction of having performed my duty, and can appeal to the Searcher of Hearts for the purity of my views.

God of peace and love, look down in mercy on thy erring creatures! and bid hatred, madneſs, and murder ceaſe!

July 25, 1793.

J. W.